PATTERNS OF POWER

The Umayyad Caliphate

The Complete Study

630 — 661 — 750

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with Claude (Anthropic)

Held as tested, not revealed.

A case study in the Patterns of Power series.

Primary sources quoted exactly; modern scholarship paraphrased and credited.

Contested figures given as ranges. Nothing reconstructed from memory.

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PREFACE

PREFACE AND OUTLINE

Front matter · how this study was made, the disciplines it holds itself to, and a map of its fourteen parts

The collaboration

This is a case study in the Patterns of Power series, applying the series' framework to the Umayyad Caliphate — from the submission of the Banū Umayya at the taking of Mecca in 630, through Muʿāwiya's accession in 661, to the destruction of the dynasty at the Great Zāb in 750. The framework is a lens for reading how any order of power is founded, dressed and held: the floor of force beneath every order, the robe of doctrine laid over the floor to make the force cheap, the settlement that divides the spoils, the cost column in which each subject prices defection, the seam through which a people's beliefs are managed, the default by which an elite coordinates without instruction, and — running under all of it — position logic, the proposition that rulers in like positions converge on like answers because a position poses a problem with only a few good solutions.

The Umayyads were chosen because they isolate a variable the series had been carrying without naming: **the age of the doctrine an order rules by.**

Every other conquest in this collection took up a legitimating doctrine that had been in service for centuries. The Manchus borrowed a Chinese one two thousand years old and wore it for two hundred and sixty-eight years. The Sasanians they and everyone else inherited from had four centuries of state-endowed priesthood behind theirs. Roman emperors summoned the councils that defined the faith they professed. In each case the ruler's prerogatives had already been written into the text by interpreters he employed, and the garment fitted because generations of tailors had let it out.

The Umayyads took power thirty years after their doctrine's founder died. Nobody had let anything out. The text was fixed within living memory, the witnesses were alive

and could be asked, and the clause about the ranking of persons said what it said without qualification by descent. That single fact turns out to run underneath every module of this study, and the case exists to trace what it does.

The case has a second use. It is a **control case** — eighty-nine years, ended catastrophically, with the family hunted across three continents. The collection's long survivors leave five centuries of accreted piety over their founding arrangements, and a study of them spends much of its effort digging the machine out from under it. Here there was no time for the accretion. The engine is visible because formation never got the generations it needed to obscure it.

The study was built the way the series is built, one module at a time. The author brought the framework, the direction and the judgement of the whole, and held the collaboration to its disciplines; Claude, Anthropic's model, did the research — verifying load-bearing quotations, dates and figures by search against sources reproducing the primary text before any module was written — and produced the drafts, applying the framework module by module, each presented and confirmed before the next was begun. Where the research contradicted the framework's expectation, or contradicted the working notes carried into the study, the research was followed and the expectation revised. The framework is scaffolding and a lens, not a cage, and several of this study's better findings are corrections to what it had predicted.

The problem of the sources

One difficulty governs this case more than any other in the collection and must be stated before anything else.

The narrative spine of Umayyad history is hostile testimony. Al-Ṭabarī, al-Balādhurī, al-Yaʿqūbī and the rest were compiled a century and more after the events, under the dynasty that had hunted the Umayyad family to death, by men with a professional stake in how that family looked. In the case of the revolution that destroyed them, the compilers were writing the founding narrative of the regime they served. Every charge in the indictment reaches us through that filter, including the charges this study finds most persuasive.

The response has been to lean, wherever possible, on evidence that is documentary rather than narrative: the Egyptian papyri of Aphroditō and the Nessana documents;

the coins, including the dirham of 75 that carries the caliph's own title; the dated inscriptions at Ḥammat Gader and Ṭā'if; the mosaic inscriptions of the Dome of the Rock; the standing buildings; and the non-Muslim chronicles, Coptic, Syriac and Greek. Each module's closing note states which kind of evidence carries which claim.

And the editing is not a hypothesis. It is visible in gold in Jerusalem, where the founder's name was cut out of the dedication panel of the Dome of the Rock, an Abbasid caliph's set in its place, and the date of the year seventy-two left standing.

The disciplines

Five rules govern every module.

Quotation. Public-domain primary sources — Qur'ānic text, treaties, inscriptions, coin legends, chancery letters, papyri, poetry — are quoted exactly, in the original where the wording is the evidence, because in a legal fiction the precise words are the argument. Modern copyrighted scholarship is paraphrased, briefly, and credited.

No fabrication. No quotation, date, attribution or figure is invented or reconstructed from memory. What could not be verified is dropped or flagged, never guessed — and this study flags a great deal. Contested figures are given as ranges, and this case has many: the armies of the conquest, the poll-tax schedules, the executions after Dayr al-Jamājim, the mortality of the plague, and the composition of the Khurasani revolutionaries are all spans or open questions rather than numbers, and the reasons are stated where they matter.

Gravity without partisanship. Suffering is held with gravity, and the study refuses both flattery and demonisation. Its watchword is that legibility is not pardon: to understand how a thing was done is not to forgive its being done. Equally, naming an origin as built is not a debunking. A thing that was built and then became real is a different and more durable object than a lie, and the men who defended it were not dupes. The framework has no view on whether the revelation was true and neither has this account.

Contribution. Every module returns a refinement to the framework, stated plainly in its closing section, rather than merely applying the framework to the case.

Held as tested, not revealed. The pattern is treated as something discovered and tested against the evidence, not handed down as doctrine — a tendency, never a law, and one corrected wherever the record refuses it.

What this case added to the framework

Because this is the collection's only case of a conquest running a doctrine younger than its own rulers, several mechanisms are visible here that the long survivors obscure.

Chief among the refinements: that **the age of a legitimating doctrine is a variable of the first order**, because an old creed has slack that interpreters were paid to put in it and a new one has none and has witnesses — so that a conqueror should prefer an old robe to a good one; that a ruler can occupy the interpreter's position in person only where the fusion of rule and revelation is *institutional* and old, and will be called a usurper where it was *personal* and recent; that a caste paid in claims rather than in things can be dispossessed by a clerk without a war, and will spend its whole existence contesting the register because the register is all it has; that a state which funds the collection of its doctrine's evidence without owning the body that interprets it has not captured the seam but **armed** it; that where formation has not had the generations to install a belief in childhood, the whole weight falls on costly display, which is the one currency a ruler cannot mint, because its content is that he had nothing to gain; that the first-generation mildness of a conquest is largely a function of the conqueror's illiteracy and expires on the schedule of his learning, so that where mildness has an expiry date it was never a policy; that the disguised labour draft is the technique of a conquest answering to a metropole, and its absence is evidence about the extractor's audience rather than his restraint; that a conqueror who captures a fiscal system captures its exemption categories and installs himself in one of them; that a man defends an arrangement in proportion to how much of his position the arrangement *invented*; that the identities a state pays through are the identities its factions will form along, so that a conquest caste registered by descent group will fracture along descent groups; that an order providing no survivable way to be in opposition converts every critic into a rebel, and has thereby abolished not the opposition but the loyal; that the purge following a revolution is proportional to the ambiguity of the slogan that made it; that an order can be exhausted not by losing a war but by **running out of war**; and

that the metabolic note is called not when an order falls but when the coordination stops — so that before attributing a catastrophe to a regime change one should ask whether the incoming party wanted the machine.

One settlement fiction is proposed as an addition to the card's three: **perpetual dedication**, the declaration that conquered soil is the community's common property in perpetuity and therefore not divisible among the men who took it, whose job is neither dispossession nor the binding of an elite but the prevention of a conquering army from becoming a landed class.

The arc

A landscape opening and twelve modules, each with a framework function and its own title.

Landscape — the three orders on the eve. *Born of the One Womb.* Two ancient empires in which rule and revelation had been welded together across four centuries, both broken by the same war; and between them a sanctuary town whose ruling clan had lately lost a fight, and lost it to a doctrine ten years old.

1 — The Floor of Force. *A City Built to Watch Two Cities.* A dynasty whose army was quartered among the conquered rather than walled apart from them, whose violence was pointed almost entirely inward, and which built a garrison city in 702 to hold down the garrison cities of 638.

2 — The Settlement. *The Other Register.* A conquest caste paid in entitlements out of a book the state kept, and a dynasty quietly acquiring the one kind of wealth a clerk cannot cancel — with the caliph sending men to find out where the Sasanian crown-land register was kept.

3 — The Robe. *In the Year Two and Seventy.* What the Umayyads claimed to be, whom they said it to, what they spent saying it, and why the one thing they never bought was the class of men entitled to agree.

4 — Formation. *Sixteen Thousand Names and Four Thousand Men.* How a belief fifty years old was installed in adults whose scepticism was fully grown; why the state's apparatus reached only the people it had already won; and a rising whose only purpose was to atone for a failure five years earlier.

5 — The Cost Column. *A Sawyer for the Mosque of Damascus.* Why the ordinary subject complied, for whom the arrangement was a better bargain than the one it replaced, how long that lasted, and what the one great administrative apparatus of this state was actually built to catch.

6 — Extraction. *His Land and His Dwelling.* How the surplus was taken and in what medium, and how the one clause in the ruling doctrine that admitted anybody opened a hole in the treasury the state spent ninety years failing to close.

7 — Information and Suppression. *I Fear the Loss of Knowledge.* What this order policed and what it left entirely alone; the one thing it ever funded inside the seam; and why paying for the collection of a doctrine's evidence was the most expensive act of the dynasty's ninety years.

8 — Elite Coordination and the Default. *The Price Agreed at Jābiya.* The chain audited link by link from the caliph to the village headman; what the arrangement paid each man to defend it; and the three places where a group with standing and means stopped being paid.

9 — Plurality or Foreclosure. *The Sealed Letter.* What counterweights existed that the apex did not own; where the real protections came from and who bargained for them; and why one of this dynasty's two great settlements outlived it by a millennium while the other destroyed it.

10 — Change and Collapse. *The Name They Were Forbidden to Speak.* Which crack opened the floor and when; why a slogan that named nobody was the most efficient instrument in the field; and what the morning after disclosed about who had been meant all along.

11 — The Grim Accounting. *No Layer of Destruction.* What the order cost in the sword's column and the metabolic one; why the second is very nearly empty and what that does and does not prove; and what is missing from a reckoning conducted only in the things a spade can find.

12 — Convergence and Divergence. *An Old Robe, Not a Good One.* The case read against the corpus; the one variable that runs under all twelve modules; and the strongest case for the defence, stated in its own voice and answered without flinching.

A note on sources.

This front matter is descriptive and makes no primary-source claims of its own; every factual assertion about the case is established, with its sources and its limits marked, in the module it summarises. The framework it describes is the series'; the disciplines it lists are the ones the modules hold themselves to and document in their own closing notes. Readers should note in particular the limitation stated above and repeated throughout: that the narrative spine of this period is hostile testimony transmitted by the successor regime, that this study has preferred documentary evidence wherever documentary evidence exists, and that where it has had to rely on the narrative tradition it has said so. *Part of the collection* Patterns of Power. *Tested, never revealed.*

L A N D S C A P E

BORN OF THE ONE WOMB

Landscape · the three orders on the eve — two ancient empires in which rule and revelation had been welded together across four centuries, both broken by the same war; and between them a sanctuary town whose ruling clan had lately lost a fight, and lost it to a doctrine ten years old

The silver from the churches

In 615 the imperial mint at Constantinople struck a coin of a kind it had not struck in quantity for something over two centuries. It was silver, in an empire whose currency had run on gold and copper since Anastasius; it weighed six *grammata*, about 6.84 grams to the nominal standard, and was probably reckoned at twelve to the gold solidus; and the metal for it came chiefly out of church plate the state had taken. Around the cross-potent on its three steps ran a legend no Roman coin had ever carried: **DEVS ADIVTA ROMANIS** — *God, help the Romans*.

Scholars disagree about the tone. The older reading, and Walter Kaegi's, takes the prayer as a symptom of an empire in extremity; a recent argument by Douglas Whalin reads it instead as a battle-cry, propaganda for defiance rather than a confession of fear. The disagreement is worth noting and does not much matter here, because either way the same two facts sit on the same disc: the state had melted the church's silver to pay soldiers, and it had put a prayer on the money. In the empire that would shortly lose Syria and Egypt to men from the desert, the treasury and the sanctuary were the same institution seen from two angles, and everyone concerned understood it.

The war that produced the coin had begun in 602, when the Byzantine army mutinied, killed the emperor Maurice and raised Phocas; and Khosrow II, whom Maurice had restored to the Persian throne a decade earlier, declared war to avenge his patron. It ran twenty-six years. Persian armies took Antioch, then Damascus, then in 614 Jerusalem, from which the True Cross was carried off to Ctesiphon; by 619 they held Egypt, the granary of Constantinople. Heraclius, who had come from Africa and

deposed Phocas in 610, spent a decade unable to buy peace at any price, then from 622 fought his way east through Armenia and Azerbaijan and in December 627 broke the Persian field army at Nineveh.

What followed on the Persian side is the part that matters. Khosrow was deposed and killed in 628 by his son Kavadh II, who made peace and then died within months of the plague. In the four years after that the throne of the King of Kings passed among Ardashir III, the general Shahrbarāz, Khosrow's daughters Bōrān and Āzarmīdokht, and others, several of them killed; and stability of a sort returned only in 632 with the accession of Yazdegerd III, a grandson of Khosrow and a boy. Heraclius meanwhile carried the recovered Cross back into Jerusalem in a procession — the date is usually given as 21 March 630, though the chronology is disputed and some of the evidence points to 629 or to a return arranged by Shahrbarāz after April 630. He entered, the tradition has it, on foot.

In or about the same year, a thousand miles to the south, another man entered another sanctuary, cleared it of its images, and did not have to fight for it. No chronicle in Constantinople or Ctesiphon recorded that at the time, and there was no reason it should have.

Church and state born of the one womb

Take the Persian order first, because its shape is the sharper of the two and its failure the more instructive.

It was four centuries old and it was not original. In April 224 at Hormozdgān, Ardashīr, a sub-king in Persis and by tradition the grandson or son of a custodian of the temple of Anāhitā at Istakhr, killed the last Arsacid Great King, Artabanus IV, and ended four hundred years of Parthian rule. The Arsacids had themselves taken their empire from the Seleucids, who held it because Alexander had taken it from the Achaemenids, who had taken it from the Medes and the Babylonians. Ardashīr's own claim was that he was not innovating but restoring: that the Parthians were an interruption, that the true faith had decayed under them, and that he was putting back what Alexander had scattered.

That claim survives in a document whose transmission has to be stated before it is used. The *Letter of Tansar* as we have it is a sixth-century composition, preserved in a

thirteenth-century Persian history of Tabaristān by Ibn Isfandiyār, apparently resting on a genuine third-century letter from Ardashīr's high priest to a vassal king who had not yet submitted. Its answer to the charge that Ardashīr had extinguished the fire-temples is that the temples in question were a Parthian innovation, unauthorised by the kings of old. And its most quoted sentence, in Mary Boyce's rendering, states the settlement outright: church and state were *"born of the one womb, joined together and never to be sundered."*

That is a programme, and the record shows it carried out. Under Ardashīr and his successors an orthodoxy was fixed, an Avestan canon assembled under royal direction, fires founded and endowed at royal expense, and a priestly hierarchy built up to a chief of priests, a *mowbedān mowbed*. The man who did most of the building left his own account, and unlike the *Letter of Tansar* it is contemporary, cut into rock, and self-commissioned. Kartīr, who served Ardashīr, Shāpūr, Hormizd and two Bahrāms, had his career and his achievements inscribed at Naqsh-e Rustam, Naqsh-e Rajab, Sar Mashhad and the Kaʿba-ye Zardosht, and among the achievements he chose to record was this, in D. N. MacKenzie's translation as adapted by Shai Secunda: *"And Jews and Shamans and Brahmans and Nazarenes and Christians and Baptists and Manichaeans were struck in the empire."*

How much of that was done and how much was priestly boasting is genuinely open. Prods Oktor Skjærvø reads the language as the hyperbolic rhetoric normal to such epigraphy; Parvaneh Pourshariati observes that it is not clear how far Kartīr's declarations reflect implementation. But the ambition is not in doubt, because the man paid stonecutters to record it, and what he thought worth recording is a fact about the position he occupied whether or not the Jews and the Manichaeans were struck as thoroughly as he says. He was the servant of a dynasty, and the service he advertised was the elimination of rival interpreters.

Four hundred years of that produced something very specific: a body of doctrine composed, canonised and taught by men whose standing came from the crown, and into which the crown's prerogatives had accordingly been written. Religion and kingship are brothers — a proposition about the king's rights, sitting inside the creed, put there by priests the king maintained. It is the cheapest possible arrangement while the kingship holds. Its defect appears the moment the kingship does not, and the defect appeared on schedule: between 628 and 632, with four or more claimants in as many

years and two of them queens, the priesthood had no independent ground to stand on, produced no candidate of its own, and could do nothing but wait. A robe fused to an office cannot outlive a vacancy in the office. When the Arab armies came at Qādisiyya and Nihāwand they met an establishment that had been magnificent for four centuries and had, structurally, nowhere to put its weight.

The one the empire could not make agree

The Roman provinces the Arabs would take were older still as conquests and much noisier as belief.

Syria had been Roman since Pompey in 64 BC and Egypt since Octavian in 30 BC, and both had been Greek-administered for three centuries before that. Christianity had arrived in them as a persecuted sect, become the emperor's religion in the fourth century, and become compulsory within a hundred years of that — which is to say the faith that the villagers of the Nile valley and the Syrian limestone massif held as simply the truth had been installed over their ancestors by imperial decision, and had comprehensively taken. That is the ordinary case: a built thing that becomes real is more durable than a lie, and by 630 no Coptic peasant experienced his Christianity as a Roman imposition. He experienced it as the world.

What he did not experience as the world was Constantinople's version of it. The Council of Chalcedon in 451 defined Christ in two natures and deposed Dioscorus of Alexandria, and the majority in Egypt and a great part of Syria refused the definition. Two centuries of alternating persuasion and force followed, and by the seventh century Egypt and Syria each carried two parallel hierarchies: one Chalcedonian, appointed from the capital and known to its opponents as Melkite, the emperor's men; and one Miaphysite, poorer, local, and the one the population actually followed. Further east, in Sasanian territory, sat the Church of the East, dyophysite, cut off from the empire and periodically persecuted by the Persians as a Roman fifth column — Christians on both sides of the frontier, each suspect to the state nearest them.

Heraclius, having won his war, tried to close the schism with a formula, and the attempt produced the sharpest single image in this landscape. In 630 or 631 he appointed Cyrus, bishop of Phasis, to Alexandria as Chalcedonian patriarch and simultaneously as his civil governor of Egypt — one man holding the interpretation

and the sword in the same hand, which is what a state does when it has concluded that its doctrine will not be accepted on the doctrine's own merits. Cyrus put the compromise, monoenergism shading into monotheletism, to a synod at Alexandria in June 633 as a nine-article Pact of Union; the emperor made monotheletism official by the *Ecthesis* of 638; and the formula satisfied Rome no more than it satisfied the Copts.

Meanwhile the Miaphysite patriarch of Alexandria, Benjamin, spent roughly thirteen years in hiding, in Scetis and in the monasteries of Upper Egypt, ordaining clergy from concealment. His brother Mina was tortured to make him give up the hiding place, and, refusing, was drowned. That account comes from the *History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria*, a tenth-century Arabic compilation of older Coptic material assembled under a bishop with every reason to blacken the Chalcedonians, and it should be read as what it is. But the outline is not in dispute, and neither is what happened next. The same source preserves the letter that ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ sent through the provinces after taking Alexandria, in B. T. A. Evetts's translation:

> "There is protection and security for the place where Benjamin, the patriarch of the Coptic Christians is, and peace from God; therefore let him come forth secure and tranquil, and administer the affairs of his Church, and the government of his nation."

Set that beside the drowning of Mina and the arithmetic of the conquest becomes visible before the conquest has happened. The Roman state had held its interpretive monopoly in its richest provinces by force for the better part of two centuries, and force is expensive. What the Arab commanders found in Egypt was not a population quietly persuaded of anything Constantinople believed. It was a majority church whose leadership the state had driven underground, and whose restoration cost the conqueror precisely one letter — a letter that bought thirteen years of accumulated grievance against the previous holder of the ground, at no charge, permanently, and without anyone having to be persuaded of a word about Muḥammad.

The framework's usual caution runs the other way, and the caution should be stated because the exception is what makes this case unusual: a conqueror ordinarily inherits a quiet he did not earn and mistakes it for consent to himself. In Egypt and much of Syria he inherited noise he had not made, and could stop it for free. That is a different and rarer inheritance, and a great deal of what the Umayyads later did with their non-

Muslim subjects — and could go on doing profitably for ninety years — descends from the terms available on the ground in 641.

The lord of this house

Between the two empires lay a peninsula neither of them had thought worth conquering, and in its western uplands a town with a sanctuary.

What Mecca actually was is more contested than most accounts admit. The received picture of a great emporium on a spice route between south Arabia and the Mediterranean was demolished, or at least very seriously damaged, by Patricia Crone in 1987: the classical incense trade had collapsed centuries earlier, the overland route had lost to the sea, and the Islamic tradition's own reports describe the Meccans dealing chiefly in leather, cloth and foodstuffs, advertised as cheap. Crone's method drew furious objection — R. B. Serjeant's review is the notorious one — and her conclusions are not settled. What can be said without picking a side is what the Meccans said about themselves, in a short Meccan sura that survives in its own words:

لِإِيلَٰفِ قُرَيْشٍ · إِۦلَٰفِهِمْ رِحْلَةَ ٱلشِّتَآءِ وَٱلصَّيْفِ · فَلْيَعْبُدُواْ رَبَّ هَٰذَا
ٱلْبَيْتِ · ٱلَّذِىٓ أَطْعَمَهُم مِّن جُوعٍ وَءَامَنَهُم مِّنْ خَوْفٍۭ

> *For the covenant of Quraysh — their covenant of the journey of winter and summer — let them worship the Lord of this House, who has fed them against hunger and secured them against fear.*

Fed against hunger and secured against fear: the sura names the two goods, and the second is the interesting one. What Quraysh held was custody of a sanctuary and of the truce around it — a defined ground and a defined season in which men whose clans were at feud could meet without killing each other. In a landscape with no state, that is a coordination good of real value, one that has to be guaranteed by somebody, and the clan that guarantees it is in a position to take a cut of everything the guarantee makes possible. It does not need to be a spice emporium to be worth holding. It needs only to be the one place where a deal can be struck safely, and the men who keep it are the men everyone else must deal through.

Within Quraysh the relevant descent runs from Quṣayy through ʿAbd Manāf, whose sons Hāshim and ʿAbd Shams founded the two lines that would spend the next century and a half opposite each other. From ʿAbd Shams came Umayya, and from Umayya the Banū Umayya. They were not the first family of Mecca when Muḥammad began to preach; the Banū Makhzūm were, under Abū Jahl. That changed on one afternoon in 624, when the Meccan force was broken at Badr and the Makhzūmī leadership was killed in the field, after which the war leadership of Quraysh passed to Abū Sufyān b. Ḥarb b. Umayya, who commanded at Uḥud in 625 and at the Trench in 627 and lost.

One community to the exclusion of other people

What he lost to had been built in the north, at the oasis of Yathrib, from 622.

The document that describes it is the one modern scholarship has been readiest to accept as genuinely of the Prophet's lifetime — the *ṣaḥīfa*, the so-called Constitution of Medina, preserved in two versions, in Ibn Isḥāq through Ibn Hishām and more briefly in Abū ʿUbayd's *Kitāb al-Amwāl*. It has no sound *isnād* and its unity as a single document is disputed, Serjeant arguing it is eight documents from different years. But the case for its antiquity is a good one and W. Montgomery Watt put it in the form that has stuck: no later forger, writing under the Umayyads or the Abbasids, would have written non-Muslims into the *umma*, kept the clauses against Quraysh, or given Muḥammad so small a part.

Its opening does the work. The agreement binds the believers and the Muslims of Quraysh and Yathrib and those who follow them and struggle alongside them, and declares that they are **أمة واحدة من دون الناس** — *umma wāḥida min dūn al-nās*, one community to the exclusion of other people.

Read that as a membership rule and its novelty is plain. The community is not a tribe and not a territory. It is defined by adherence and by fighting alongside, and it is drawn expressly against everyone outside, which means it can be entered. A Persian could not become a member of the Sasanian nobility by an act of will, and a Copt could not become a Roman by professing anything, but the boundary this document draws is one a man crosses by joining. The point is made explicitly in a Medinan verse of the ninth year:

يَـٰٓأَيُّهَا ٱلنَّاسُ إِنَّا خَلَقْنَـٰكُم مِّن ذَكَرٍ وَأُنثَىٰ وَجَعَلْنَـٰكُمْ شُعُوبًا وَقَبَآئِلَ لِتَعَارَفُوٓاْ ۚ إِنَّ أَكْرَمَكُمْ عِندَ ٱللَّهِ أَتْقَىٰكُمْ

> *"O mankind, surely We have created you from a male and a female, and made you tribes and families that you may know each other. Surely the noblest of you with Allah is the most dutiful of you."* (Maulana Muhammad Ali's rendering, 1917.)

Hold that sentence, because in a hundred years it will be the first count of an indictment.

And notice what the Medinan polity was, structurally, in the person of the man who ran it. He was the channel of the revelation, the arbiter of disputes, the commander of the raids, the recipient of the alms, and the party to the treaties. Rule and revelation were fused as completely as they were fused in Ctesiphon — but not in the same way, and the difference is the hinge of everything that follows. In Persia the fusion was *institutional*: a canon fixed by councils, a priesthood on the establishment, a hierarchy with a chief at its head, an arrangement that had been running for four centuries and would have gone on running under any King of Kings who performed the rites. In Medina the fusion was *personal*. It lived in one man, it was ten years old, and it had generated no priesthood, no council, no certifying body, and no rule of succession.

In June 632 the man died. What his community inherited was not an institution that joined rule to revelation. It was a vacancy where a person had stood, and a text about which nobody yet had the standing to be the final voice.

The house of Ḥarb and the house of Abū l-ʿĀṣ

Two years before that, in 630, Muḥammad had come to Mecca with an army and the city had opened. Abū Sufyān submitted before the entry; the tradition reports the Prophet declaring that whoever entered Abū Sufyān's house was safe, and dismissing the assembled Meccans with **اذهبوا فأنتم الطلقاء** — *go, for you are the freed ones*, from which the pardoned Meccan aristocracy took the name *al-ṭulaqāʾ*. Those reports come

through the biographical tradition rather than from documents, and the phrase carried a sting that later parties had every motive to sharpen; but the outline is not seriously disputed, and neither is the fact that the leading family of the resistance was pardoned, kept its property, and was employed.

This is where the standard account of the Umayyads is usually built, and it will not bear the weight, because the Banū Umayya were not one thing.

Umayya b. ʿAbd Shams had sons, and two of their lines matter. Through Ḥarb came Abū Sufyān, who fought the movement for the better part of a decade and joined it at the end; and through Abū Sufyān came Yazīd, who commanded in Syria and died in the plague of ʿAmwās, and Muʿāwiya, who took the Syrian command after his brother and held it for twenty years.

Through Abū l-ʿĀṣ came something entirely different. Abū l-ʿĀṣ's son ʿAffān fathered ʿUthmān — one of the earliest converts in Mecca, persecuted for it by his own kin, an emigrant in the first flight to Abyssinia around 615, married successively to two of the Prophet's daughters, and from 644 the third caliph, murdered in his own house in 656 while the Qurʾān lay in front of him. And Abū l-ʿĀṣ's son al-Ḥakam fathered Marwān, ʿUthmān's first cousin and his secretary, whose descendants would hold the caliphate from 684 until the last of them was run down in Egypt in 750.

So the clan contained, in its two branches, both the movement's most persistent enemy and one of its first adherents — and the eighty-nine years of Umayyad rule were not one family's tenure but two successive ones. The house of Ḥarb held from 661 to 684, twenty-three years, ending when Muʿāwiya's grandson died childless. What replaced it, chosen by the Syrian tribal chiefs at Jābiya and confirmed in the field at Marj Rāhiṭ in August 684, was the house of Abū l-ʿĀṣ: not the pardoned enemy's line, but the murdered caliph's own. Whatever the Marwānids were later accused of, the claim they made for themselves was never that they had joined late and taken the state. It was that they were the family of a man who had been killed for it, and that everything they had done since had followed from that killing.

The discipline the framework insists on applies here at full force and should be said plainly rather than assumed. None of this makes anyone's belief a performance. ʿUthmān's early adherence and the persecution he took for it are as much facts as Abū Sufyān's late submission; the men who fought for the movement at Badr believed what they said they believed; and so, later, did the men who died at Karbalāʾ opposing their

descendants. What the split establishes is only that the material for arguing about the Umayyads, in both directions, was inside the family from the beginning, and that no single story about the clan's relation to the faith was ever going to be the true one.

What the ratio would be

The numbers are bad and must be given as ranges.

For the Arab forces at the decisive battles, modern estimates for Yarmūk in 636 run from about fifteen to about thirty-five thousand, against Arabic tradition's twenty-four to forty thousand and Byzantine figures that no one credits; the Byzantine force is put anywhere from fifteen thousand to a hundred thousand and more depending on whose reconstruction one takes. Qādisiyya, in the same year or the next, is worse served. What can be said is what Robert Hoyland and others have said: there is no good evidence for a collapse in Byzantine manpower and virtually none for Sasanian numbers at all, so the safest assumption is that the Arabs were frequently outnumbered on the field and always, permanently, and by enormous margins, outnumbered in the territory.

Against those tens of thousands stood the whole population of the Sasanian empire and of Byzantium's richest provinces — figures which cannot be stated with any precision at all for the seventh century, and which on any reckoning run to many millions. Whatever the exact proportion, it was of an order that makes the ordinary sense of the word *conquest* misleading. An army of that size can win battles and take capitals, and it did both within a decade. It cannot collect the harvest, hear the lawsuits, maintain the canals of the Sawad, or keep several million people in their villages. Those things would have to be done by machinery that already existed, staffed by men who were already trained, and the men in question would have to go on turning up for work.

Which returns the landscape to the point it has been building toward. When the Arab armies came out of the peninsula they did not arrive in a state of nature or meet three innocent baselines. They met three orders, and every one of the three was a conquest that had become the world. The Zoroastrian establishment of Iran was Ardashīr's programme naturalised across four centuries until a fire-temple was simply what a place of worship was. The Christianity of the Egyptian and Syrian villages was an imperial religion imposed on those villages' ancestors by Roman emperors, absorbed

so completely that the villagers were now defending their version of it against the empire that had brought it. And the thing the Arabs carried was the newest of the four — ten years past its founder, textual, witnessed by men still alive, and not yet worked on by anybody.

Reading the eve against the framework

The framework already holds that a conqueror never meets an aboriginal order, only an earlier conquest naturalised, and this landscape confirms it at unusual depth: three orders, three prior conquests, each one absorbed until it looked like nature, and a fourth arriving. That much is application. The refinement the case demands sits one step further in, and it concerns not the conqueror but the doctrine.

The framework asks how the trusted-information leg was acquired — forged, redirected, or inherited — and treats the answer as a fact about the party doing the acquiring. What this eve shows is that the same question has to be asked about the *garment*, because a doctrine has an age, and its age sets how much room there is inside it.

A creed four centuries old has been let out. Generations of interpreters have glossed the awkward passages, and the interpreters were on somebody's establishment while they did it, which means the ruler's prerogatives are already written into the text he professes. *Religion and kingship are brothers* is a sentence about the king's rights, sitting inside the faith, put there by priests the king maintained; the Roman emperor summoned and presided over the councils that defined the doctrine he then obeyed. Neither man was cheating. Both were wearing a garment that had been altered to fit, repeatedly, over centuries, by tailors they employed — and that, rather than any superiority in the story itself, is what an old robe is. It is why a stranger can put one on. Enough alterations have been made that there is room in it for a shape its first cutter never measured.

A creed ten years old has no alterations in it. The text is fixed within living memory, the witnesses are alive and can be asked, no gloss has yet had time to soften the clauses a ruler would rather not read plainly, and the clause about the ranking of persons says what it says without qualification by descent. There is no room in the garment because nobody has made any.

And underneath that sits the mechanism, which is the second half of the finding and the reason this study exists. Both empires had fused rule and revelation *institutionally*: a canon fixed under state authority, a priesthood the state paid, a hierarchy with an apex, an arrangement that transferred intact to whoever next held the office. What Muḥammad achieved in Medina was the same fusion achieved *personally* — total, uncontested, and lodged in one man. The two look identical from outside and behave in opposite ways at the moment of death. An institutional fusion survives its incumbent, which is why the Sasanian priesthood was still there through four years of murdered claimants, useless but intact. A personal fusion does not survive at all. It leaves a vacancy, and the vacancy is not a chair anyone can simply sit in, because everyone still remembers the man who filled it and can measure the successor against him.

So the proposition this landscape contributes, to be tested against everything that follows: **a ruler can occupy the interpreter's position himself where the fusion of rule and revelation is institutional and old, and will be called a usurper where it is personal and recent** — not because the second doctrine is stricter, but because a young robe has no alterations and living witnesses to the original cut. The two ancient empires on either side of Arabia had spent four hundred years each making the garment fit the wearer. The men who were about to take both their heartlands would inherit a doctrine on which that work had not been done, and would spend ninety years trying to do it at speed, in public, in front of people who had known the tailor.

Whether it can be done at speed, and by whom, and what it costs a dynasty to try — that is the case.

A note on sources.

The exact primary quotations here are: the legend **DEVS ADIVTA ROMANIS** from Heraclius's silver hexagram, first struck 615, of which many specimens survive; Kartīr's inscription at Naqsh-e Rustam, third century, in D. N. MacKenzie's Middle Persian translation as adapted by Shai Secunda; the *Letter of Tansar* in Mary Boyce's translation (1968), a sixth-century text preserved in Ibn Isfandiyār's thirteenth-century Persian *Tārīkh-i Ṭabaristān* and apparently resting on a third-century original — its provenance is far weaker than Kartīr's and it is used here only for the programme it

states, not as third-century testimony; ʿAmr ibn al-ʿĀṣ's letter of safe conduct for the patriarch Benjamin, from the *History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria*, in B. T. A. Evetts's edition and translation (*Patrologia Orientalis*, 1904–15), a tenth-century Arabic compilation of earlier Coptic material and openly hostile to the Chalcedonians; Qurʾān 106 and 49:13 in the Arabic, the latter in Maulana Muhammad Ali's rendering of 1917; and the opening clause of the *ṣaḥīfa* of Medina, *umma wāḥida min dūn al-nās*, as transmitted by Ibn Isḥāq through Ibn Hishām and, more briefly, by Abū ʿUbayd. The words attributed to Muḥammad at the taking of Mecca — the safety of Abū Sufyān's house, and *idhhabū fa-antum al-ṭulaqāʾ* — come through the biographical tradition rather than any document, are of a kind later parties had strong motive to shape, and are given here as tradition.

Paraphrased modern scholarship: Walter Kaegi and Douglas Whalin on the reading of the hexagram legend; Prods Oktor Skjærvø and Parvaneh Pourshariati on how far Kartīr's claims describe implemented policy; Patricia Crone's *Meccan Trade and the Rise of Islam* (1987) on the scale and content of Meccan commerce, with R. B. Serjeant's hostile review noted as the leading objection and the question left open; W. Montgomery Watt on the antiquity of the *ṣaḥīfa*, and Serjeant's argument that it comprises eight documents rather than one; Robert Hoyland and others on the impossibility of reliable numbers for the conquest armies. Contested figures given as ranges: the Arab force at Yarmūk (roughly 15,000–35,000 on modern estimates, 24,000–40,000 in the Arabic tradition) and its Byzantine opponent (15,000 to over 100,000, depending on the reconstruction); the populations of the conquered territories, which cannot be stated for the seventh century and are given only as an order of magnitude; the date of the True Cross's restoration to Jerusalem, conventionally 21 March 630 but argued for 629 and for a later transfer by Shahrbarāz. The whole of the Arabic narrative material touching this period reaches us through compilations made a century and more later, largely under the dynasty that destroyed the Umayyads, and that problem — which will govern every module of this study — is stated here at the outset rather than discovered halfway through.

MODULE 1

A CITY BUILT TO WATCH TWO CITIES

Module 1 · the floor of force — how the Umayyads came to hold organised violence, whom it was actually used against, and why the army that mattered was quartered among the conquered rather than walled apart from them

The title on the stone

Two objects survive from Muʿāwiya's own lifetime that name him, and both name him the same way.

The first is a marble slab from the Roman hot springs at Ḥammat Gader, below the Golan, cut in Greek and dated with three calendars at once — the sixth indiction, the year 726 of the colony, and, *kata Arabas*, according to the Arabs, the forty-second year. It records that the baths were cleared and rebuilt in the days of **Ἀβδάλλα Μαυία ἀμηρα ἀλμουμενην** — ʿAbd Allāh Muʿāwiya, *amīr al-muʾminīn* — by ʿAbd Allāh son of Abū Hāshim the governor, in December, for the healing of the sick, under the care of John of Gadara, the steward. It is the only epigraphic attestation of Muʿāwiya's rule to survive from Syria, the province he governed and then ruled from for something over forty years.

The second is an Arabic inscription from a dam near Ṭāʾif, dated the year fifty-eight:

هذا السد لعبد الله معاوية أمير المؤمنين بناه عبد الله بن صخر
بإذن الله لسنة ثمان وخمسين. اللهم اغفر لعبد الله معاوية أمير
المؤمنين وثبته وانصره ومتع المؤمنين به. كتب عمرو بن حباب

This dam belongs to the servant of God Muʿāwiya, commander of the believers. ʿAbd Allāh b. Ṣakhr built it, by God's leave, in the year fifty-eight. O God, forgive

> *the servant of God Muʿāwiya, commander of the believers, and make him firm and give him victory, and let the believers profit by him. ʿAmr b. Ḥabbāb wrote it.*

Note what the title is, because for the next ninety years it is the one the coins, the seals and the stones will keep using. *Amīr al-muʾminīn* is not a priestly title and not a royal one. *Amīr* is the ordinary word for a commander of troops; the compound means commander of the believers, and the believers in question are, in the first instance, the men under arms. A Greek stonecutter in the Golan, obliged in 663 to render the new sovereign's style in his own alphabet, wrote out a command title letter by letter because that was the style he had been given. It would be a mistake to read the office as merely military — the same men would soon be making very large claims indeed about what the office was for. But it is not a mistake to notice where the vocabulary starts. The floor comes first, and it is what the earliest documents actually name.

Twenty-one years before the claim

The floor in question was one province's army, and the man who ran it had been running it a very long time before he asked anything of anybody.

Muʿāwiya b. Abī Sufyān came to Syria with the conquest and succeeded to its command in 639 or 640, when his elder brother Yazīd, who held it, died in the plague that swept the Syrian army at ʿAmwās. He was confirmed in the post by ʿUmar and kept in it by ʿUthmān. When he first refused allegiance to ʿAlī in 656 he had held the same command for something like seventeen years; by the time he was proclaimed in Jerusalem he had held it for twenty-one. That is the single most important fact in the founding, and it is not a fact about doctrine or genealogy. Twenty-one years is long enough for the men who muster to have been recruited, paid, promoted, disciplined, quartered and led into battle by one commander for their entire adult service, and long enough for a good proportion of them to have known no other.

But the Syrian army was not shaped like the armies of the other conquered provinces, and the difference is structural rather than incidental. In Iraq the conquerors were settled in purpose-built garrison towns — Baṣra and Kūfa, both usually dated to the later 630s — laid out by tribal quarter, with the congregational mosque and the governor's residence at the centre; Egypt got Fusṭāṭ in 641 and Ifrīqiya Qayrawān in 670, on the same model, and the army of the east was concentrated at Merv. The *miṣr* is

a conquest caste housed apart from the conquered: walled, registered, stipended, deliberately not dispersed among the population it was drawing revenue from.

Syria was tried on that pattern and abandoned. Al-Jābiya in the Jawlān, the old Ghassānid centre, was selected as the Syrian army's camp, and it did not take. Instead the province was divided into military districts — *ajnād*, four under ʿUmar (Dimashq, Ḥimṣ, al-Urdunn, Filasṭīn) with a fifth, Qinnasrīn, added under Yazīd I — whose boundaries followed the old Byzantine provinces with modifications, and the troops were settled through the existing towns and countryside rather than concentrated in new foundations. Syria is the only province of the caliphate organised this way; the arrangement was never exported.

Follow what that does. An army quartered in existing cities among an overwhelmingly Christian population, drawing its pay through a fiscal machinery inherited intact from the Byzantines and largely staffed by the same Greek-writing clerks, is not a self-contained tribal community in a walled quarter with its own grievances and its own factional life. It is a standing provincial force whose members' relations with one another run through the command rather than through the quarter. What binds it is the payroll and the commander. And that, rather than any special Syrian piety toward the house of Abū Sufyān, is why the Syrians stayed loyal while the Iraqis did not: the Iraqi *amṣār* were communities before they were armies, and the Syrian *ajnād* were armies before they were communities.

The same command built something the caliphate had not previously possessed at all. Muʿāwiya had ships. Cyprus was raided and reduced between 649 and 654; Rhodes and Arwād followed; and in 655, off the Lycian coast near Phoenix, an Arab fleet — put at around two hundred vessels against a Byzantine force reckoned at up to five hundred — beat the emperor Constans II at the battle later called Dhāt al-Ṣawārī, the Battle of the Masts, reportedly by lashing ships together and turning a sea fight into a boarding action. The Arabic and Byzantine numbers for that engagement are as unreliable as all such numbers, and the sequel is worse: the great siege of Constantinople which Theophanes places in 674–678 has been redated by Marek Jankowiak to 667–669 and questioned altogether by James Howard-Johnston, so the chronology of the first attempt on the capital should be given as contested rather than stated. What is not contested is the capability. A power that had no navy in 640 was contesting the eastern Mediterranean within a decade, using Egyptian timber and the

shipwrights of the conquered coasts, and it did so under the direction of the governor of Syria.

The floor was inward from the start

It is often said that the caliphate's armed force was first turned against fellow Muslims at Ṣiffīn in 657. The sequence does not support it.

The first military operations conducted by the caliphate were the *ridda* campaigns of 632–33, against tribes across Arabia that had come to terms with Muḥammad and declined to continue the arrangement with Abū Bakr. Before a single soldier crossed into Byzantine or Sasanian territory, the army had been used to compel the submission of people who had already submitted once. Then, in December 656, at the Battle of the Camel outside Baṣra, ʿAlī's forces fought a coalition that included two of the most senior surviving Companions and the Prophet's widow. Only after that came Ṣiffīn, in May–July 657.

What was new at Ṣiffīn was not that Muslims fought Muslims. It was that one province's standing army faced another's, in a fight over who held the centre — and that it ended without a decision. The engagement broke off when copies of the Qurʾān were raised on Syrian lances and arbitration demanded; ʿAlī's own troops obliged him to accept; the arbitration at Adhruḥ dragged from roughly February 658 to January 659 and settled nothing except that ʿAlī's authority was worse afterwards than before. Muʿāwiya was proclaimed caliph by his Syrian supporters in about May 658 while the matter was still formally open.

Meanwhile the acceptance of arbitration split ʿAlī's own coalition. The faction that withdrew — the Khārijites, on the ground that judgement belongs to God alone — was destroyed by ʿAlī at Nahrawān in 658; of some four thousand, about twelve hundred took an offered amnesty and the great majority of the rest were killed, with the figures reported variously between roughly fifteen hundred and twenty-eight hundred. ʿAlī's Iraqi coalition never recovered. Egypt went over to Muʿāwiya's side in 658. In January 661 a Khārijite killed ʿAlī in the mosque at Kūfa.

The shape of the first civil war is therefore not what a floor-of-force narrative would predict. Muʿāwiya never destroyed his rival's army. He fought it to a standstill once, then spent four years outlasting it, detaching its commanders, raiding the populations

that supported it, and waiting while it consumed itself — and when it was finished he did not march in and take the caliphate but negotiated a written cession from ʿAlī's son al-Ḥasan, on conditions, and only then entered Kūfa. That is a floor used as leverage rather than as a hammer, which is what an intelligent commander does when the enemy shares his creed and a massacre would cost him more than the war.

The habit of caution did not last long. In 661, after a Khārijite tried to kill him at prayer in the mosque at Damascus, Muʿāwiya is reported to have established a personal guard, a body of select troops, and the *maqṣūra*, the screened enclosure that from then on separated the ruler from the congregation at Friday prayer. Whatever else it was, it is a piece of architecture that says the man leading the prayer expects to be attacked by the men praying behind him.

Twelve thousand Syrians, and a commander who would take the job

Between 680 and 692 the Syrian army was used against the movement's own centre three times, and the record of how the first of those operations was staffed is the most revealing single fact in this module.

In October 680, at Karbalāʾ, the forces of the Umayyad governor of Kūfa killed the Prophet's grandson Ḥusayn and some seventy of his companions. Three years later Medina repudiated Yazīd. Yazīd's response was to send an army into the Ḥijāz, and here the tradition preserves something that no later party had any motive to invent. His first choice for the command, the Umayyad ʿAmr b. Saʿīd b. al-ʿĀṣ, refused it, on the stated principle that he would not shed the blood of his fellow Quraysh. ʿUbayd Allāh b. Ziyād, the governor whose men had done Karbalāʾ and who was still carrying the consequences, refused it too. The command went instead to Muslim b. ʿUqba al-Murrī — elderly, loyal, a veteran, and not of Quraysh.

Read that as an audit of the floor, because that is what it is. The caliph had the soldiers. He had twelve thousand of them, and they were sufficient: on 26 August 683 they broke the Medinans at the lava field east of the city and then sacked the town of the *ḥijra*. What he did not have, and had to search for, was a commander willing to point them at Quraysh. Two men in a position to hold that command declined it, at obvious cost to their standing with the man who was offering it, on a rule about

kinship that no statute enforced and no soldier below them held. The constraint on the floor was not capacity. It was a code operating inside the coordinating class, and the way round it was to find a general who stood outside the class the code covered.

Note also what it cost, and when. On the day, it worked: Medina was taken and the rebellion in the Ḥijāz's second city ended. The army marched on toward Mecca; Muslim b. ʿUqba died on the road at Mushallal and the command passed to his lieutenant Ḥusayn b. Numayr al-Sakūnī, governor of the Ḥimṣ district. Mecca was invested from late September 683, bombarded with mangonels, and in the course of the siege the Kaʿba, over which a wooden covering stood, caught fire and was damaged. The siege ended inconclusively in November when news arrived that Yazīd was dead.

And then the invoice, on a delay. The sack of Medina became one of the fixed charges in every later denunciation of the dynasty; Julius Wellhausen's phrase for what the tradition made of Muslim b. ʿUqba is "the heathen incarnate," and the tradition doing the making was assembled under the regime that destroyed the Umayyads. The earlier layers of the same tradition, tellingly, present him as devout and reluctant. Both facts belong on the page. An act that solved a real problem in three weeks was still being used against the men who ordered it a century later, when it could no longer be defended and the people who might have explained it were dead.

The floor re-founded

In 684 the Syrian army broke in half, and what came out of the break was a different instrument.

Muʿāwiya's grandson died childless after a few weeks, ending the line of Abū Sufyān. Most of Syria went over to Ibn al-Zubayr in Mecca: al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Qays in Damascus, the Qaysī tribes at Qinnasrīn and in the Jazīra, the Judhām in Palestine, the southerners at Ḥimṣ. What was left of the Umayyad interest gathered at a conclave at Jābiya, and there the loyalist tribes — the Quḍāʿa under Ibn Baḥdal of Kalb, with their Kindite allies — elected Marwān b. al-Ḥakam caliph in exchange for economic privileges. In August 684 at Marj Rāhiṭ, north of Damascus, that coalition beat the much larger Qaysī army of al-Ḍaḥḥāk, who was killed. The figures reported are 6,000 or 13,000 mostly infantry against 30,000 or 60,000 mostly cavalry, and they should be treated as the conventional numbers of a tradition that liked a lopsided victory.

Three things follow from that day and all three run to the end of the dynasty. First, the caliphate passed from the house of Ḥarb to the house of Abū l-ʿĀṣ — a different branch, with a different claim, whose descent ran to the murdered ʿUthmān rather than to the pardoned Abū Sufyān. Second, the Syrian army's cohesion was gone: the Qays regrouped under Zufar b. al-Ḥārith at Circesium and the feud between Qays and Yaman that began at Marj Rāhiṭ went on undermining the one force the dynasty could actually rely on for the next sixty-six years. Third, and least noticed, the terms had changed. Muʿāwiya's floor had been an army he commanded. Marwān's floor was an army a tribal coalition had *sold* him at a conclave, for privileges, against another part of the same army. From 684 the Umayyads were paying for what the Sufyānids had commanded.

The reconquest took eight years. ʿAbd al-Malik retook Egypt in 685, beat Muṣʿab b. al-Zubayr at Maskin on the Tigris in 691, and in 692 sent al-Ḥajjāj b. Yūsuf to Mecca with a small Syrian force, reinforced, to finish it. Al-Ḥajjāj besieged the city and bombarded it, and Ibn al-Zubayr was killed. The sanctuary at Mecca had now been under catapult fire from the armies of the same dynasty twice in nine years.

Struck off the roll

Then the instrument was rebuilt, and the rebuilding is where the floor takes its final Umayyad shape.

Under ʿAbd al-Malik the payments recorded in the register stop looking like what they had been. The *ʿaṭā'* of the conquest generation had been closer to a pension — a claim earned by precedence in Islam and by having been present at the conquests, paid to a man and, in practice, to his sons. Under the Marwānids it begins to look like a salary: payment for current service, in units that are no longer simply tribal, to men whose position depends on continuing to serve. Hugh Kennedy's reading of the payment evidence is the standard one and it is the right one. A conquest caste drawing an inherited entitlement and a standing army drawing wages are two different objects, and the caliphate converted the first into the second across roughly two decades.

The conversion was completed by a revolt. In 700 ʿAbd al-Raḥmān b. Muḥammad b. al-Ashʿath, a Kufan nobleman commanding an army raised for the eastern frontier, turned it round and marched on Iraq, gathering to himself Arab troops, converts and

religious men who had had enough of al-Ḥajjāj. It was the most serious internal rising the Marwānids faced, and it took Syrian reinforcements to put it down at Dayr al-Jamājim in 701. The reprisals afterwards are reported by al-Ṭabarī in figures that run from about eleven thousand executed in Baṣra to about a hundred and thirty thousand, and the width of that range is itself worth recording: nobody counted, and the tradition preserving the numbers was written under the dynasty that came in denouncing the one that did the killing.

What happened next is the part that matters structurally, and it happened in two moves.

The first was administrative. The armies of Kūfa and Baṣra were demobilised and removed from the military payroll. The men who had marched with Ibn al-Ashʿath were not disarmed one by one, tried, or deported. Their names were taken off the register, and with the names went the stipend, which for most of them was the whole of their income — because they were the descendants of men who had been paid in claims on a treasury rather than in land, and who had been kept out of the countryside precisely so that the claim would be the only thing they had.

The second was architectural. In about 702, on the Tigris between the two cities he had just disarmed by accountancy, al-Ḥajjāj began building a new town. Its congregational mosque is dated by excavation to 83 AH; the foundation is variously given as 702 or 703–704. He put his palace in it and made it his seat, and he garrisoned it with Syrian troops. Its name is **Wāsiṭ** — *the middle one* — because that is where it stood: midway between Kūfa and Baṣra, the two garrison cities the first conquest had built.

Set the two foundations side by side and the whole ninety years is legible in the distance between them. Kūfa and Baṣra were laid out in the later 630s to house a conquest caste apart from the conquered, so that the conquerors could hold down Iraq. Wāsiṭ was laid out sixty-five years later to house a *second* conquest caste apart from the *first* one, so that the Syrians could hold down the men of Kūfa and Baṣra. The instrument did not change. Its object did, completely, and the change was not disguised: the city was built in the open, named for its position between the two places it was watching, and garrisoned by men everybody could see were foreigners in the province they policed.

Two ways of being held

Ask, finally, who could not leave, because a floor is only as good as the impossibility of walking away from it.

For the conquered, the answer is documented and dull. They had no weapons, no organisation above the village, and — this is the part the papyri actually show — no freedom of movement. The dossier of Papas, pagarch of Edfu in the 660s, already carries government measures against fugitives. From the reign of ʿUmar II onward there survives a series of Egyptian travel permits, *sijillāt*, dated between about 717 and 751, issued to individuals and specifying where they might go; and Greek fiscal registers annotated in the margins to record that a taxpayer had fled or died, and lists of fugitives arrested. A cultivator whose name stood against a village's assessment could not become a man from somewhere else, because the paperwork followed him and the paperwork was the point.

For the conquest caste, the answer is stranger and more instructive. The Arab trooper was armed, organised, and mobile in a way no Coptic villager was — and he was held just as firmly, by the opposite instrument. His position rested on a name in a register maintained by the state; he had been kept out of landholding by the original settlement of the conquered provinces, so the register was not a supplement to his income but very nearly the whole of it; and the register could be edited. That is why the Iraqi armies were struck off rather than hunted down. It is far cheaper to cancel a claim than to fight a man, and a caste paid in claims has, by accepting the arrangement, handed the payer a weapon that costs nothing to use.

The two populations were therefore held by devices that look nothing alike and do exactly the same work. The peasant could not move because a document said where he lived. The soldier could not defect because a document said what he was owed. In both cases the binding instrument was a list, and in both cases the state kept it.

Reading the floor against the framework

The framework holds that force is the founding fact, that a belief is laid over it to make it cheap, and that holding the ruled down is the solved problem while the dangerous one sits a level up inside the hierarchy. This case complicates that division in a way

worth stating precisely, because the Umayyads ran both problems through the same instrument and the record shows what that costs.

Almost every notable application of Umayyad organised violence in ninety years was directed not at the conquered but at other Muslims, and usually at other Arabs: the *ridda* campaigns before the conquests had properly begun; the Camel and Ṣiffīn; Nahrawān; Karbalāʾ; the lava field at Medina and the bombardment of Mecca; Marj Rāhiṭ, which was Syrians against Syrians; Maskin; the second siege of Mecca; Dayr al-Jamājim and the mass executions that followed. Against Copts, Aramaic-speaking cultivators and Iranian peasants the record shows tax collection, movement control and very little else, because very little else was needed. The floor was overwhelmingly pointed inward, and it was pointed at the men who had built it.

From which follows the finding this module contributes, in two halves.

Where a conquest caste is paid rather than enfeoffed, the payroll — not the sword — is the floor's primary instrument against the caste itself. The Umayyads never had to disarm Iraq, which would have required another war against men who had won the empire and knew how to fight. They struck the names off the register, and the armed caste's power evaporated without a blow, because its weapons had never been what made it dangerous. Its *claim* was. A settlement that pays its warriors in entitlements rather than in ground has, in the act of paying them, built the mechanism for cancelling them; the entitlement is a rope with the other end in the treasury. The medieval European alternative — land in exchange for armed service — leaves a rival with a retinue and no way to take it back but war. This leaves a rival with an IOU.

And the corollary, which is the expensive half: an order that garrisons its own conquest caste has published which part of that caste it does not trust, and has converted a fiscal problem into a permanent occupation. Wāsiṭ is the publication, in brick, with a name that states its function. But the arithmetic underneath it is not favourable. Every Syrian trooper quartered there had to be paid, fed and housed out of Iraqi revenue in order to watch men who had just been removed from Iraqi revenue; the saving was therefore much smaller than the accountancy suggests, and what was bought with it was the standing resentment of a province that could see exactly what had been done to it and by whom. The Umayyads had one reliable army and it could be in one place at a time. They put it in Syria and Iraq. The great garrison they never

got round to garrisoning was Khurasan — and Khurasan is where, in 747, the thing finally broke.

One refinement follows for a diagnostic the corpus already uses. Visible surveillance is normally read as the tell of a belief that never took, and so it is; but this case shows the tell must be read *directionally*, because it names its object. What the Umayyads watched, registered, garrisoned and struck off was not the conquered population. It was the conquering one. The belief that had not taken, therefore, was not the Coptic or Iranian peasant's belief in Islam — a question the floor never had to ask, because the peasant had no means of asking it back. It was the conquest caste's belief in the Umayyads. Read the direction of the watching and it tells you where the order thought it was thin; and this order, on its own showing, thought it was thin exactly where the swords were.

A note on sources.

The exact primary quotations are the Greek building inscription from the baths at Ḥammat Gader, dated 42 AH / December 662, in Leah Di Segni's edition and translation, which is the sole surviving epigraphic attestation of Muʿāwiya's rule in Syria; and the Arabic dam inscription from near Ṭāʾif dated 58 AH. Both are contemporary, dated and non-narrative, and both give the ruler the title *amīr al-muʾminīn*. The documentary evidence for movement control comes from the Egyptian papyri — the dossier of Papas, pagarch of Edfu, from the 660s; the Arabic and Greek travel permits datable between roughly 717 and 751; and Greek fiscal registers with marginal notes on fugitives and abandoned land. The archaeological date for Wāsiṭ's first congregational mosque, 83 AH, comes from Fuad Safar's excavations of 1936–42.

Everything else in this module rests on the narrative Arabic tradition — al-Ṭabarī above all, with al-Yaʿqūbī and al-Balādhurī — compiled a century and more after the events under the dynasty that overthrew the Umayyads and by men with a stake in how the Umayyads looked. That applies to the whole sequence from Ṣiffīn to Dayr al-Jamājim, to the refusals of ʿAmr b. Saʿīd and ʿUbayd Allāh b. Ziyād to command against Medina, and to the account of the *maqṣūra* and the caliphal guard. Those particular reports are used here because they run against the interest of the tradition preserving them: a hostile compiler had no motive to record that Umayyad grandees declined to

shed Qurashi blood, nor to preserve an early stratum presenting the sacker of Medina as devout and unwilling.

Contested figures are given as ranges: the fleets at the Battle of the Masts (about 200 Arab vessels against a Byzantine force put at up to 500, both conventional); the armies at Marj Rāhiṭ (6,000 or 13,000 against 30,000 or 60,000); the Khārijite dead at Nahrawān (roughly 1,500–2,800 of some 4,000, with about 1,200 amnestied); and the executions in Baṣra after Dayr al-Jamājim, reported anywhere from about eleven thousand to about a hundred and thirty thousand — a range wide enough that it should be read as evidence about the tradition rather than about the killing. The chronology of the first Arab attempt on Constantinople is genuinely unsettled: Theophanes places a siege in 674–678, Marek Jankowiak has argued for 667–669, and James Howard-Johnston has questioned the event's shape altogether; no date is asserted here. Dates in this module follow the conventional reckoning where it is stable — Karbalāʾ 10 Muḥarram 61 / October 680, al-Ḥarra 26 August 683, Marj Rāhiṭ August 684, Dayr al-Jamājim 701 — and are given as approximate where it is not, including the foundation of Wāsiṭ (702, or 703–704) and the arbitration at Adhruḥ (roughly February 658 to January 659). Modern scholarship paraphrased and credited: Hugh Kennedy on the payment of the early Islamic military and on the Marwānid armies; Julius Wellhausen, quoted in four words, for the judgement the later tradition passed on Muslim b. ʿUqba.

MODULE 2

THE OTHER REGISTER

Module 2 · the settlement — who got what, and why a conquest caste paid in entitlements out of a book the state kept could be dispossessed by a clerk, while the dynasty paying them was quietly acquiring the one kind of wealth a clerk cannot cancel

What the conquerors found

Begin with the ground, because everything else follows from the state it was in when they reached it.

The alluvial plain of southern Iraq — the *Sawād*, the black land, so called for the contrast between the irrigated fields and the desert beside them — was the richest agricultural territory in the world the Arabs took, and it arrived in their hands already surveyed, already assessed, already administered and already producing a revenue in cash. The Sasanian state had run a land tax on it for centuries, collected through a class of local landholders, the *dihqāns*, who assessed the villages, gathered the money and handed it up. When the conquest came, those men negotiated the terms of surrender for their own communities — including the rate of tax — and then went on doing exactly what they had been doing, for a different recipient.

This matters because of what it made unnecessary. Where a conqueror meets an order that does not hold land as property — office-land held at a king's pleasure, lineage land held inalienably by a descent group, collective patrimony redistributed among households — his first act must be a conversion: he has to turn a relation between persons into a transferable thing before there is anything to grant. That operation is expensive, it is visible, and it is a social revolution disguised as a technical reform. The Arabs in Iraq were spared it entirely. The Sasanians had performed the conversion long before, in the ordinary course of running a bureaucratic empire; the land was already a taxable object with a number against it in a book. What the conquest changed was the destination of the payment.

So the settlement of the caliphate's richest province did not begin with a land question at all. It began with a revenue question, and the revenue was already flowing. The only thing anybody had to decide was who was going to receive it.

The land they did not divide

They very nearly decided the obvious way.

The soldiers who had won at Qādisiyya expected the ordinary treatment of conquered territory: the army takes the spoil, four-fifths divided among the men who fought, one-fifth reserved. Land had been divided so before. And the tradition is unanimous that ʿUmar refused, that he was pressed hard on it, and that the argument was fierce. The decision he made — after consulting the leading Companions, ʿAlī among them, in the reports as they reach us — was that the conquered land of the Sawād would not be distributed. It would be left in the hands of the people cultivating it, who would keep working it and pay the land tax; the tax would go to the treasury; and the treasury would pay the soldiers.

The justification is the interesting part, because it is a legal fiction of a very high order and it did not need to be. The land was declared *fayʾ* — not spoil belonging to the men who took it, but property held for the whole community of Muslims, including, the jurists later insisted on adding, the generations not yet born. The character was permanent: land that was *kharāj* land stayed *kharāj* land, whatever happened to it afterwards, even if its owner became a Muslim, even if a Muslim bought it.

Read the extravagance of the term as a measure of what it was overwriting. Nobody needed to invoke unborn Muslims to explain a decision about tax collection in 640. The claim is grand because the thing it is refusing is grand: a whole army's expectation of its due, backed by precedent and by the ordinary logic of conquest, being set aside by a proposition about the interests of people who did not exist. And the reason to state it that way rather than simply to command it is the same reason such propositions are always stated that way — a decision can be reversed by whoever made it, and a discovery about the nature of the property cannot.

Now follow what the fiction actually did, because it did two things and only one of them is ever discussed.

The first is the one the tradition celebrates: it kept the productive countryside intact and in expert hands, prevented the dispersal of a conquering army into a landlord class across a province it did not know how to farm, and preserved a revenue stream that a division would have destroyed within a generation. That is a real achievement and it should be counted.

The second is the one nobody had to intend for it to be true. **A soldier who receives a share of the Sawād has something the caliph cannot take back without a war. A soldier who receives a claim on the treasury has something the caliph can take back with a pen.** The men who fought for the division were not being greedy in some way the men who opposed it were not. They were arguing, without the vocabulary to say so, about whether their descendants would hold property or hold an entitlement — and they lost, and the consequence ran for a century.

Precedence in Islam

The instrument that recorded the entitlement was the *dīwān*, the register, instituted about the year 20 of the era (640–41) and reproduced in every provincial capital: at Kūfa, at Baṣra, at Fusṭāṭ, later at every centre where stipendiaries were paid.

Its organising principle was neither tribe nor rank nor need. It was *sābiqa* — precedence in Islam, priority in joining the movement — modified by *qarāba*, proximity to the Prophet. The order of the register ran from the wives of the Prophet at the top, then the Emigrants and the Helpers, then those who had been at Badr, then those converted before the truce of Ḥudaybiya, then those converted at the conquest of Mecca, then the veterans of the *ridda* campaigns, then the men of Yarmūk and Qādisiyya, and so downward. The precise figures should be given as a range because the sources give ranges: the wives of the Prophet are variously reported at ten and twelve thousand dirhams a year; the men of Badr at five or six thousand; the Helpers at anything from three to six thousand across different reports; Ḥudaybiya converts at four thousand; the men of the conquest of Mecca at three thousand; the veterans of the great battles at two thousand. Women were enrolled too, and the reported rates for them vary as widely. The dispute between the compilers is itself worth registering: the relative order is stable across the tradition and the amounts are not, which is what one

expects when a real institution is being described from a distance of two centuries by men who cared very much about the principle and not at all about the accountancy.

The principle is what to hold onto. **The criterion for membership in the settlement was doctrinal.** Not descent, not conquest-share, not military rank: when you joined the movement. A register built on that principle is making a claim about what the state is for, and the claim is that the state is the movement's instrument and its wealth belongs to the movement's members in proportion to their service to it.

Which makes the entry at the upper end of the register worth pausing on. Abū Sufyān b. Ḥarb, who had commanded the Meccan armies against Muḥammad at Uḥud and at the Trench and had submitted only when the city fell, appears in the reports on a substantial stipend. So do others of the pardoned Meccan aristocracy. It is possible to read that as generosity and it is possible to read it as the purchase of a dangerous faction's quiescence; the sources reporting it were mostly written by people who wanted it read the second way. What can be said without choosing is structural. A register that ranks by precedence in Islam and nonetheless seats the movement's late enemies near the top has already been adjusted for political weight in its first year of operation — which tells you that the doctrinal criterion was, from the beginning, a criterion applied by somebody with other considerations in view. The instrument was never as clean as its principle.

Death dates

Now the transmission rule, which is the question the framework insists on asking of any settlement and which this one answers in a way that turns out to matter enormously.

The *ʿaṭā'* was not, in the ordinary sense, inherited. It attached to a name, and the register recorded names. Sons of registered men were themselves registered — the order of the *dīwān* explicitly provided for the children of those who had been at the early battles — but they entered by enrolment, as new entries against their own names, and not as heirs receiving a thing their father had owned.

The documentary evidence for this is unusually good, and it is the sort of dry administrative fact that settles an argument the narrative sources cannot. The Egyptian papyri show that the stipend registers of the middle Umayyad period recorded **death**

dates. The state tracked, in the register itself, when the man on the roll had died. It did that because it had to: a claim against a name is extinguished when the name is, and the fiscal apparatus needed to know, so that the entry could be closed and the payment stopped. The papyri also show the administrative machinery underneath — in Egypt the *ʿashīra*, a unit within the register responsible for distributing the stipend, so that the payment reached the man through a structure the state maintained and could reorganise.

Set that against the alternative and the difference is the whole module. A man who holds an estate transmits a *thing*. His son inherits it by the operation of law, on the day of the death, without anybody's permission; a state that wishes to take it must find a court or an army. A man who holds an entry in the register transmits nothing. His son gets an entry of his own if the register grants him one — and the register is kept by the treasury, revised at intervals, and, as Iraq discovered in 701, capable of being closed.

Where the other register was kept

And all through the same period the men who kept the first register were building a second kind of holding entirely.

When the Sasanian empire fell, its royal domains fell with it. These estates — the *ṣawāfī*, from a word meaning what is taken as a select portion — did not go into the *fayʾ*. They went to the state, which in practice meant to the caliph, and they were extensive: they had been the personal lands of the King of Kings and of a dynasty overthrown in the field, along with the properties of Sasanian notables who had died or fled. Muʿāwiya, the reports have it, took a close and specific interest in reclaiming them, and made enquiries to establish **where the register of the Sasanian crown lands was kept**.

That is the sentence this module is named for, and it should be allowed to sit for a moment. The founder of the dynasty, holding a settlement whose central instrument was a book listing who was owed what, went looking for the other book — the one listing what the previous dynasty had owned.

The figures reported for what he found are the usual unreliable ones and should be treated as an order of magnitude rather than an accounting: al-Yaʿqūbī puts the yield of crown lands from Iraq and neighbouring regions under Muʿāwiya at around a hundred

million dirhams, against about a hundred and twenty million from the land tax of the Sawād and Kūfa. Whatever the true ratio, the two streams were of comparable size, and only one of them went into the register.

Because that is the mechanism, and it is the settlement's structural fault line. **The yield of the crown lands did not go to the *dīwān*. It went to the caliph's own treasury.** Which means that every acre reclassified from tax-paying *fay'* into crown estate was an acre removed from the fund out of which the stipends were paid. The dynasty's private wealth and the conquest caste's entitlement drew on the same soil, and the first grew at the second's expense, by an arithmetic that anybody with access to a provincial ledger could follow.

Nor did the crown lands simply sit there. Portions of them were granted out as *qaṭā'iʿ* — grants, "cut-off portions" — to members of the ruling family and to their clients. Two features of those grants matter. They were **hereditary**: they passed as property, to heirs, by inheritance. And they were taxed at the lower rate, at *ʿushr*, the tithe, rather than at the *kharāj* borne by the land around them. So the same conquest that fixed the character of the Sawād as tax-paying land in perpetuity carved out of it a category of estate that was permanent, transmissible, and lightly assessed, and gave those estates to the family that had made the rule.

Set the two transmission rules side by side, in the same province, in the same decades, under one authority:

The conquest caste held a claim, against a name, in a register the state kept, revised at intervals, extinguished at death and renewed only by re-enrolment.

The dynasty and its clients held estates, in land, heritable, at a preferential rate.

Nobody wrote that contrast down as a policy. It is what two separate decisions, each defensible on its own, added up to over sixty years — and it is the reason the collapse, when it came, was led by men who were on the register rather than by men who were under it.

Syria, which was different

None of the above describes the province the dynasty actually came from, and the difference should be stated rather than smoothed.

Syria was not organised on the garrison-city model and its Arabs were not a stipendiary caste walled off from the land. They were settled through the existing towns and countryside of five military districts on largely Byzantine boundaries, among a population that remained overwhelmingly Christian, and they acquired property. The physical residue of that acquisition is still standing: between roughly 660 and 750 the caliphs and princes of the house built somewhere in the region of twenty to thirty rural complexes across the Syrian and Jordanian steppe — the so-called desert castles, which the archaeology has steadily reinterpreted away from the older picture of hunting lodges for bored princes.

Qaṣr al-Ḥayr al-Gharbī, between Damascus and Palmyra, sits inside a very large walled agricultural estate whose remains include structures for producing olive oil. Qaṣr al-Ḥayr al-Sharqī, further east, stands within an enclosure of several square miles, irrigated. Umm al-Walīd, Khān al-Zabīb, Qaṣr al-Ḥallābāt and the rest recur to a common template: a square residence on a Roman fort plan, a bath-house, a reservoir or dam, and an agricultural enclosure. Jean Sauvaget's argument, that the *quṣūr* represent a systematic agricultural colonisation of the steppe margin continuing what Ghassānid princes and Christian monks had begun, remains the productive reading, and recent work has multiplied rather than reduced the range of functions these places served.

So: in the province that supplied the army, the elite held land and improved it. In the provinces that supplied the revenue, the caste held entitlements. That is not a small asymmetry, and it does not require anyone to have designed it to explain a great deal about who stayed loyal. A Syrian noble with an estate in the Ghūṭa had something that survived a change of caliph. A Kūfan on the register had something that survived only as long as the register did.

Egypt sat between the two. It had been taken very largely by agreement rather than by storm, its tribute fixed by treaty; its Arabs were concentrated at Fusṭāṭ and Alexandria, its stipendiaries enrolled in a *dīwān* whose operation the papyri let us watch; and its countryside stayed in Coptic hands under a Coptic administrative apparatus that the conquerors kept because it worked. The pattern across the caliphate is therefore not one settlement but three or four, and the variable selecting between them is visible: **the more complete the fiscal apparatus the conqueror found, the less he touched the land and the more he simply redirected the flow.**

The door, and who could go through it

That leaves the boundary. The settlement's marker of inside and outside was a name in the register, and the question the whole of the following century turns on is how a man not already in it could get in.

He could not do it by converting. Conversion made a man a Muslim; it did not make him a stipendiary, and the register was not a register of Muslims but of men with claims arising from participation in the movement's foundation and its wars. The door that did exist was *walā'* — clientage — and its shape is the single most consequential fact in the Umayyad settlement.

Patricia Crone's analysis of the institution is the standard one and its details are the point. *Walā'* bound **two individuals**, never two groups; both parties were called *mawlā*, in the reciprocal way that Arabic allows; and it arose in one of two ways, on manumission or on voluntary commendation. The clientage that arose on conversion was a species of the second. It was almost certainly a survival of Roman provincial clientage, taken over from the conquered along with the tax registers and the road system and, as Crone puts it, without acknowledgement. And its legal content ran in the patron's favour: the patron acquired rights of inheritance against his client's estate, and incurred the obligation to contribute to blood-money owed on the client's behalf.

Take that apart and see what a convert was being offered. Not membership in a category — the tie could not be made with a group, so there was no collective route in, ever, for anybody. Not equality — the relation was named for closeness and asymmetry at once, and its financial provisions gave the patron a claim on the client's property and not the reverse. Not an exit — the tie was permanent and passed to the client's descendants, so that a man's great-grandsons were still the clients of somebody's great-grandsons, still carrying the patron's tribal name without being of the tribe. And not, in the ordinary case, a stipend: the reports and the modern scholarship agree that *mawālī* were paid less than Arab soldiers where they were paid at all, though the practice varied by province and by decade and the picture is not uniform enough to state flatly.

What the door produced, therefore, was **dependants rather than members, one at a time, in perpetuity**. And this is where the settlement collides with the doctrine it

was running on, without anyone having to arrange the collision. The register's own organising principle was precedence in Islam — a criterion about faith. The revelation the register's beneficiaries recited said that God had made men into peoples and tribes that they might know one another, and that the noblest of them was the most God-fearing. And the man who heard that, believed it, said the words, and presented himself, found that the only way into the community it described ran through becoming a named individual's hereditary client.

Nobody had to point this out for it to work as a grievance. It was an arithmetic anybody could do, in the language the state itself was using, and doing it required no organisation, no leader and no doctrine that was not already the state's own.

Reading the settlement against the framework

The framework asks three things of a settlement: what the instrument found, which fiction it ran, and what the grantee owed. This case answers the first two in ways the card does not yet cover, and the third in a way that turns out to be the finding.

On what the instrument found. The settlement's characteristic technology — converting relations between persons into transferable things, so that land which was office or lineage right or collective patrimony becomes an estate that can be granted — did not have to be deployed here at all, because a previous empire had already done it. The Sasanian fiscal machine handed the conquerors a cadastre, a rate, a collecting class and a going revenue. The lesson generalises and belongs on the card: **where the conquered order is itself a mature tax state, the conversion of relations into things has already been performed, and the conqueror's settlement problem is not a property problem but a distribution problem.** He does not have to make the wealth grantable. He has to decide who receives it, and that decision is a fight inside his own coalition rather than a violence done to the conquered.

On the fiction. None of the three the card names — vacancy, recognition, divisibility — is what happened in Iraq. All three are fictions about ownership, and all three move land to somebody. What the Umayyad settlement ran was a fiction about **entitlement**: the declaration that the conquered soil was the common property of the Muslim community as a body, in perpetuity, including its unborn generations, and therefore not divisible among the men who had taken it. Its job was neither

dispossession nor the binding of an elite. Its job was **to prevent the conquering army from becoming a landed class** — and it worked, and the price of it working was that the army became a pensioner class instead. Propose it as a fourth family and name it plainly: *perpetual dedication*. Reached for where the conqueror has captured a working revenue system, wants it kept intact, and needs a reason his own soldiers will accept for not dividing it. Expect it to be justified in the most expansive available terms, because it is being addressed to armed men who think they are owed something — and read the expansiveness, as always, as the measure of what is being refused.

On the consideration, which is the finding. The card holds that the diagnostic fact about any co-optation is what the grantee owed, and that the medieval European grant of land for armed service installs a permanent civil-war risk in the same clause that solves the coordination problem, while the modern colonial grant deletes the service clause and leaves a dependant with a title. This case is neither, and it is a third thing the card should carry.

The Umayyad settlement bought military service — and paid for it with a revocable entitlement rather than with a thing. The man on the register owed the state continuous armed service; he was a soldier, he had weapons, and his sons would be soldiers. So the medieval consideration is fully present. But what he received in exchange had no independent existence: it was an entry in a book the payer kept, extinguished by his death and renewed only by the payer's act. He therefore had every capacity to make a civil war and no asset to make one *with* — and, crucially, no asset the state had to fight him to recover.

That combination is worth naming because it is very nearly the ideal solution to the coordination problem and it failed anyway, which tells you something about why. It gave the state a disarming instrument that cost nothing: in 701, after the Iraqi armies had risen, they were not defeated into submission and then disarmed man by man; they were struck off the payroll, and the province's military class ceased to exist as a claimant on the treasury without a single further battle. No feudal monarch in Europe ever had a lever like that. And yet the same feature that made the caste cheap to discipline made it impossible to satisfy, because a man whose entire standing is an entry in somebody else's ledger has, permanently, exactly one grievance available to him, and it is always about the ledger.

Which supplies the sentence the rest of this study will be testing. **A caste paid in claims can be dispossessed without a war, and will spend its whole existence contesting the register — because the register is the only thing it has, and everyone can see who is keeping it.** The Umayyads solved the problem of an armed elite becoming territorially independent. What they got in exchange was ninety years of politics conducted entirely as a quarrel about entitlement, in which every faction's demand took the form of a claim on the roll, and in which the dynasty's own steadily accumulating estates — heritable, lightly taxed, growing out of revenue that would otherwise have gone into the roll — sat in plain view of every man who was arguing.

A note on sources.

Almost everything in this module about the original settlement of the conquered lands comes through the Abbasid-era juristic and historical literature — Abū Yūsuf's *Kitāb al-Kharāj*, Yaḥyā b. Ādam's *Kitāb al-Kharāj*, al-Balādhurī's *Futūḥ al-buldān* and *Ansāb al-ashrāf*, al-Ṭabarī, al-Yaʿqūbī, Ibn Saʿd, Ibn ʿAbd al-Ḥakam for Egypt — and a specific caution attaches to it beyond the general one. These are not chronicles reporting a curiosity; they are **legal precedent**, written by men whose own century's tax law turned on what ʿUmar was held to have decided about the Sawād. A jurist arguing in ninth-century Baghdad about whether a converted landlord still owed *kharāj* had a live stake in the answer, and the Sawād traditions were shaped in the arguing. The reported stipend figures should therefore be read as a stable hierarchy carrying unstable numbers, and are given here as ranges for that reason: ten to twelve thousand dirhams for the Prophet's wives, five or six thousand for the men of Badr, three to six thousand across different reports for the Helpers, four thousand for the pre-Ḥudaybiya converts, three thousand for the converts of the conquest, two thousand for the veterans of Yarmūk and Qādisiyya. Al-Yaʿqūbī's revenue figures — roughly a hundred million dirhams from crown lands against roughly a hundred and twenty million from the land tax of the Sawād and Kūfa — are of the same character and are used here only for the comparison of magnitudes they license, not as accounts.

Against that, three bodies of evidence are documentary and carry the weight where they touch. The Egyptian papyri attest the operation of the *dīwān al-ʿaṭā'* directly, including the recording of death dates on the stipend registers in the middle Umayyad

period and the *ʿashīra* as the unit through which the stipend was distributed; the standard studies are Kosei Morimoto's on the Egyptian *dīwāns* and the fiscal administration, with Sobhi Bouderbala on the *jund* of Egypt. The Umayyad rural estates are archaeological and standing: the agricultural enclosure and olive-oil installations at Qaṣr al-Ḥayr al-Gharbī, the irrigated enclosure at Qaṣr al-Ḥayr al-Sharqī, the compounds at Umm al-Walīd and Khān al-Zabīb, with Denis Genequand's excavation and synthesis, against Jean Sauvaget's earlier thesis of agricultural colonisation. And the institution of *walāʾ* is reconstructed here from Patricia Crone's *Roman, Provincial and Islamic Law* and *Slaves on Horses*: that it bound two individuals and never groups, arose on manumission or voluntary commendation, gave the patron inheritance rights against the client's estate and obliged him to contribute blood-money, and was in all likelihood a survival of Roman clientage. Crone's Roman-origin thesis is contested and is flagged as her argument rather than asserted. The claim that *mawālī* received lower stipends than Arab soldiers where they received any is well attested in the tradition but varied by province and period, and is stated here with that qualification rather than flatly. Michele Campopiano's work on Iraqi land tenure from the late Sasanian to the early Islamic period supplies the reconstruction of the *ṣawāfī* and the structural conflict between crown land and the stipend fund.

MODULE 3

IN THE YEAR TWO AND SEVENTY

Module 3 · the robe — what the Umayyads claimed to be, whom they said it to, what they spent saying it, and why the one thing they never bought was the class of men entitled to agree

The name they took out

Two hundred and forty metres of gold-ground Kufic mosaic run round the two faces of the octagonal arcade inside the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem. It is the largest surviving statement of anything the Umayyads believed about themselves, and it is the oldest dated monumental inscription in Arabic. At the end of the outer band comes the dedication:

> In the name of God, the Merciful the Compassionate. There is no god but God. He is One. He has no associate. Muḥammad is the Messenger of God, the blessing of God be on him. **The dome was built by servant of God ʿAbd [Allah the Imam al-Maʾmūn, Commander] of the Faithful, in the year two and seventy.** May God accept from him and be content with him. Amen, Lord of the worlds, praise be to God.

The year seventy-two of the era is 691 or 692 of the common one. The caliph al-Maʾmūn reigned from 813 to 833. He was an Abbasid, and the Abbasids had destroyed the Umayyads sixty-three years before he was born.

What happened is visible in the mosaic. The dedication originally named ʿAbd al-Malik b. Marwān; at some point under Abbasid rule the founder's name was cut out and al-Maʾmūn's set in its place; and whoever did the work left the date. The tesserae of the substituted name do not match. So the building now carries, in gold, a sentence saying that a man who was not born until 786 built a dome that was finished in 692.

Begin here because it is the module twice over. It is the Umayyad robe in its most complete surviving form, and it is a demonstration, executed on the robe itself, of what became of Umayyad claims afterwards. Almost everything else in this module reaches us through people who did to the written record what somebody did to that panel. The mosaic is one of the few places where the alteration is still visible because the alterer forgot a number.

What the building says

The verses in the arcade are not chosen at random and they are not a general profession of faith. A very large proportion of the inner band concerns one subject: the identity of Jesus.

> O People of the Book! Do not exaggerate in your religion nor utter aught concerning God save the truth. The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, was only a Messenger of God, and His Word which He conveyed unto Mary, and a spirit from Him. So believe in God and His messengers, and say not 'Three' — Cease! (it is) better for you! — God is only One God. Far be it removed from His transcendent majesty that He should have a son.

And a little further round:

> Oh God, bless Your Messenger and Your servant Jesus son of Mary. Peace be on him the day he was born, and the day he dies, and the day he shall be raised alive! Such was Jesus, son of Mary, (this is) a statement of the truth concerning which they doubt.

And, on the south-west of the inner face:

> Lo! religion with God (is) Islam. Those who (formerly) received the Book differed only after knowledge came unto them, through transgression among themselves.

That is an argument, addressed to a named party, on the precise point at issue between them. It was put up in the city where Christ was crucified, on the platform of the destroyed Jewish temple, four hundred metres from the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, in a building whose form — a domed octagon on an ambulatory — is the

form of a Christian martyrium, executed in mosaic by craftsmen working in the Byzantine manner. It is not a neutral shrine that happens to carry scripture. It is a rival cathedral making a case.

Why it was built has been argued for a century and the arguments should be laid out rather than resolved. Ignaz Goldziher, working from al-Yaʿqūbī, held that ʿAbd al-Malik meant to divert the pilgrimage from Mecca, which his rival Ibn al-Zubayr then held, and to give the Syrians a valid substitute; the difficulty is that al-Yaʿqūbī was a Shīʿī writing under the Abbasids, which makes him precisely the sort of witness who would say that, and the charge has accordingly been doubted as often as it has been repeated. Oleg Grabar and others read the building as competition with the Christian monuments of Jerusalem and a claim to supersede them. Amikam Elad reads it as an elevation of Jerusalem's status in its own right, drawing on the sacred traditions already attached to the site. Milka Levy-Rubin has argued for a third audience, Constantinople, with the Dome as a New Temple built to answer the Hagia Sophia and the imperial claim to have inherited God's throne on earth. Nasser Rabbat and Nuha Khoury read it as a symbol of Umayyad rule as such. None of these excludes the others, and a very large building has room for several purposes.

What is not in dispute is the expenditure, and the expenditure is the evidence the framework asks for. Force never pays for what it does not need. ʿAbd al-Malik built this in the middle of a civil war he had not yet won — the work was finished in 72, and Ibn al-Zubayr was not killed at Mecca until 73 — at a cost no chronicler can state and every chronicler thought worth remarking on. A man in that position who spends on that scale on a building covered in argument has told you that some audience's recognition was worth buying, and the text on the walls tells you at least one of the audiences by name.

The costliest thing they built

The second monument makes the same point at greater expense and adds one the first does not.

Al-Walīd I, ʿAbd al-Malik's son, commissioned the Great Mosque at Damascus around 706 and it was finished about 715. The reported cost is of the traditional kind and should be treated as such: Ibn al-Faqīh, writing in the tenth century, gives figures

between six hundred thousand and a million dinars; another account has it consuming seven years of the state's tax revenue. Either way the order of magnitude is enormous, and the caliph is said to have asked for and received skilled mosaicists from the Byzantine emperor to do the decoration.

The site is the module's other half. There had been a temple to the Aramaean storm-god Hadad on that platform by the early first millennium BC. The Romans built a temple of Jupiter on it. In 391, under Theodosius I, that became the cathedral of St John the Baptist. After the conquest of Damascus in 636 the building was shared: the Christians kept the church, and the Muslims prayed under a portico on the south side, which faced the right way. Al-Walīd ended the sharing. He negotiated with the Christian leadership, promised that every other church in the city would be safe and gave a further church to the community in compensation, bought the cathedral, and demolished it.

And then kept the walls. The outer boundary of the mosque, a hundred and fifty-seven metres by a hundred, is the Roman temenos, still standing. During the demolition a chamber was found containing a head believed to be John the Baptist's, and al-Walīd, rather than removing it, had it left in place and a marble shrine built over it. The Baptist — Yaḥyā, a prophet in Islam — is enshrined inside the mosque today, and one of the minarets is called the Minaret of Jesus.

Four cults on one platform across three thousand years, each of the last three arriving by conquest, each keeping the previous building's enclosure, and the last of them keeping the previous religion's relic and giving it a tomb. That is what it looks like when a conqueror finds a sacred site that has already been captured twice. He does not have to argue that the place is holy; his predecessors did that for him. He has only to argue about whose.

The claim on the coin

The buildings are addressed to whoever came to see them. The coinage went everywhere, and it carries the doctrine in its shortest form.

In the mid-690s ʿAbd al-Malik struck an experimental gold and silver coinage bearing an image of the caliph himself, standing, robed, hand on a sheathed sword. On a dirham of the year 75 the legends flanking the figure read, to the left, **أمير المؤمنين**

— *amīr al-mu'minīn*, commander of the believers; and to the right, خليفة الله — *khalīfat Allāh*, God's deputy. On some of the copper issues of the same period the second title is cut short of a letter, *khalfat Allāh*, in the way of die-sinkers working fast on a new legend.

That coin matters out of all proportion to its size, because it is the first documentary attestation of the title. Everything else — the poetry, the chronicles, the letters — reaches us through later compilation. This is metal, dated, struck by the state, and it says what the state called its ruler.

Within two or three years the experiment was abandoned and the standing figure went. From 77 in gold and 78–79 in silver the reformed coinage carried no image at all: only Arabic script, the profession of faith, the whole of the chapter of sincerity — *Say: He is God, the One; God, the eternally Besought; He begetteth not nor was begotten; and there is none comparable unto Him* — and the verse that He sent His messenger with guidance and the religion of truth to make it prevail over all religion. Every one of those texts is an argument with Christianity, put onto the object that passes through every hand in the empire; and the reform makes the coinage the first mass-circulation carrier of Qur'ānic text in history.

Behind the title stands a doctrine, and its reconstruction is the most contested question in the field. Patricia Crone and Martin Hinds argued in *God's Caliph* that *khalīfat Allāh* meant what it says — deputy of God, not successor of God's messenger — that the Umayyad caliph claimed to be God's appointee on earth with authority over the law as well as the state, and that the later Sunni arrangement, in which the scholars own the law and the ruler merely enforces it, was the outcome of a fight the caliphs lost rather than an original condition. Their strongest single document is a letter that al-Walīd II is reported to have circulated to the eastern provinces in 743, setting out the succession: it uses *khalīfat Allāh* throughout, and it never once uses *khalīfat rasūl Allāh*, the formula a later orthodoxy would have required. In the edition of the late Umayyad chancery letters the same pattern holds; the title appears repeatedly, its successor-formula not at all.

The objections deserve their weight. Andrew Marsham has shown that *amīr al-mu'minīn* was the ordinary protocol title, used everywhere and in every register, while *khalīfat Allāh* appears less often and mostly in courtly and panegyric settings — so the two are not alternatives but a working title and a high one. And Crone herself later

revised the origin: rather than an autochthonous Arabian formulation, she came to see the concept as rooted in Hellenistic ideas of kingship as they had passed into the Christian Roman empire, the king fashioned on the model of his Maker. That revision is worth registering for what it does to the case. If the Umayyad claim to be God's deputy is a late-Roman imperial idea in Arabic dress, then a Marwānid caliph in Damascus is doing exactly what the framework predicts of any apex: borrowing a currency of legitimacy that the audience he most needed — a Syrian population and a Syrian administration formed by four centuries of Roman rule — already honoured.

Two audiences, two coins

Which is the question this module has to answer squarely, because the apex was plainly running more than one claim at once and the claims are not consistent if you assume a single hearer.

To the People of the Book — Christians above all, in a Syria that stayed Christian in its majority for generations — the robe says: *your scripture is not wrong, your reading of it is.* That is what the Dome's inscriptions argue and what the reformed coinage repeats. It is polemical and it is also, precisely, not a demand for conversion; it sat inside an arrangement that guaranteed the churches, protected the clergy, and had every fiscal reason to keep the Christians Christian. The message is supersession, not recruitment.

To the rival Muslim claimants — Ibn al-Zubayr holding Mecca, the ʿAlids in Kūfa, the Khārijites everywhere — the robe says something else entirely, and it says it because they have forced the question: *God appointed us.* This is the claim the Dome was built during and the coin was struck during, and it is unanswerable in the terms in which it is made, because divine appointment is not a proposition that anyone can check.

And to the Syrian army and the tribal aristocracy on which the whole apparatus stood, the robe says something older than either.

The Christian who wrote the panegyrics

Ghiyāth b. Ghawth al-Taghlibī, called al-Akhṭal, the Loquacious, born about 640, dead before about 710, was the official court poet of ʿAbd al-Malik. He had been the companion of Yazīd I before that and wrote for al-Walīd I after. He composed the great panegyrics of the Marwānid restoration; he attacked the dynasty's enemies in verse; he

supplied, in the highest register of Arabic then available, the formula that the caliph was God's deputy on earth. He was patronised by Ziyād b. Abīhi and by al-Ḥajjāj. He is, with Jarīr and al-Farazdaq, one of the three poets on whom the classical estimate of Umayyad Arabic rests.

He was a Miaphysite Christian of the Banū Taghlib, and he never converted. The tradition preserves a story that ʿAbd al-Malik put the question to him directly after a particularly fine ode, and that the poet answered, laughing, that he would accept if he might keep wine and be excused Ramadan; the caliph, who had meant it seriously, did not find it funny. Whether that exchange happened is unverifiable and the anecdote is the sort that accretes. That al-Akhṭal was a Christian, that he held the post, and that he wrote the dynasty's loftiest religious claims into verse — these are not in doubt.

Sit with that, because it is the sharpest thing in this module.

The man who put the Umayyad dynasty's highest religious claim into the language of its own coordinating class did not belong to the religion the claim was made in. He did not need to, and the reason is that the claim reaching that audience was not being transmitted as theology. It was arriving in the *qaṣīda* — the ode of praise, with its desert prologue, its journey, its boast — a form four centuries older than Islam, carrying a vocabulary of legitimacy that a Syrian tribal chief had absorbed before he ever heard of Mecca: descent, victory, generosity, the protection of clients, the humbling of rivals. A Christian of Taghlib could speak that vocabulary better than almost anyone alive, and the phrase *khalīfat Allāh* fitted into it as one more superlative for a great lord.

The framework's rule is that legitimacy is borrowed, never minted, from whatever currency the needed audience already honours — and that one apex frequently runs more than one robe at once, cut to audiences that never compare notes. Here the three are visible in three different media. The Christians got mosaic; the rival claimants got the coin and the letters; and the army got poetry, from a poet who was on the Christians' side of the argument the mosaic was making, and nobody found this strange.

The doctrine that had to be true

There was one proposition the Umayyads could not treat as a matter of taste, and the fact that they could not is the best evidence available for what they thought they were standing on.

The claim was that God had decreed their authority — that what happened, including their own accession and their own conduct, happened by God's determination. Against it stood an argument that looks metaphysical and is entirely constitutional. If a man's evil acts are his own and not God's decree, then a caliph's evil acts are the caliph's own; a Muslim who opposes them is opposing a man and not opposing God; and the whole cover the dynasty had drawn over its conduct comes off. The people who argued this were called the Qadarīs, from the word for the divine determining they were denying.

The state killed them. Maʿbad al-Juhanī, who is usually named as the first to raise the question publicly, was executed around 699 — some accounts put his death after the Ibn al-Ashʿath rising, in about 704, and the discrepancy should stand. Ghaylān al-Dimashqī, who had himself been a government official and had written to ʿUmar II urging reforms, was executed under Hishām; the reported dates range across roughly 725 to 743 and cannot be settled. The tradition attributes to al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, asked what he thought of kings who shed Muslim blood and seized Muslim property and then said their acts were God's decree, the answer that these enemies of God were liars — a line too good not to have been improved in transmission, and given here as tradition.

Now read the catalogue rather than the theology, because a state's prosecutions are its own audit of what it thinks holds it up. The Umayyads did not run an inquisition. They did not police Christology, or ritual, or the reading of the text, or the calendar. They killed men over one doctrine, and the doctrine was whether God had decreed their authority.

A dynasty that believed it ruled by conquest and lineage would have had no reason to execute a theologian. This one executed theologians on exactly the point where its title touched the creed — which tells you, more reliably than anything its own poets said, which claim it thought was load-bearing.

Tested, or revealed

The framework asks whether a doctrine is *tested* — revised when the evidence defeats it — or *revealed*, with failure read as insufficient faith. The Umayyad political claim is revealed in form and could not have been otherwise: God appointed us is not a proposition that any outcome short of removal can falsify, which is exactly what made it worth making in the middle of a civil war.

But the case has a peculiarity that the categories do not quite catch, and it is the same peculiarity the whole study runs on. The claim was unfalsifiable; **the doctrine it was made inside was not.** A creed four centuries old, worked over by generations of state-employed interpreters, offers a ruler an enormous field of unfalsifiable ground. A creed thirty years old, written down, with the founder's grandson alive and then very publicly dead, offers almost none. There was no way to check whether God had appointed ʿAbd al-Malik. There was every way to check whether Ḥusayn had been killed at Karbalāʾ by his relatives' soldiers, whether the Kaʿba had been under catapult fire in 683 and again in 692, and whether the caliph drank. The unfalsifiable claim sat on top of a mass of checkable ones, and it is the checkable ones that accumulated.

What sincerity can and cannot be read from

At the apex, sincerity is unrecoverable and the only instrument is the deviation test, held as a probability and never as a verdict: a break toward personal advantage reads cynical; a break toward something valued above both doctrine and self, at real cost, reads sincere.

Run on ʿAbd al-Malik it returns nothing clean, and the honest report is that it returns nothing clean. He was born in Medina and the tradition remembers his early life there as occupied with religious study; he then spent, on the buildings and the coinage, sums that no calculation of military advantage explains, at a moment when military advantage was what he most needed. Against that, the coinage reform served a currency policy, the buildings served a rivalry, and a man who was both devout and calculating would have done precisely what he did. Sincere belief and its strategic use are not alternatives, and the deviation test is silent where the two point the same way.

It returns something on ʿUmar II. He acted against the direct fiscal interest of the caste that maintained him, on a doctrinal argument about the equality of Muslims, in the face of the treasury's objection, and he is the one member of the dynasty the successor tradition declined to condemn — which is itself a datum, since that tradition had every motive to condemn all of them. On the deviation test that reads as sincere, and it should be recorded as such rather than absorbed into a general account of Umayyad cynicism that the evidence does not support.

And the discipline the whole collection is built on applies at full force here and should be said plainly. Naming an origin is not a debunking. That the Marwānids made a political instrument of the belief does not make the belief a performance, in them or in anybody else; the men who fought them believed as sincerely, and a great many of the men who served them were, on the record, devout. A thing that was built and then became real is more durable than a lie and is a different kind of object. The question this module asks is not whether they meant it. It is what they did with it, and what it did back.

Reading the robe against the framework

The framework names three ways a coalition acquires the trusted-information leg. It can **forge** one, manufacturing a new authority where none stood. It can **redirect** one, getting behind a channel the population already trusts and pointing that earned trust at itself. Or it can **inherit** one, destroying the previous occupant and refilling the vacancy.

The Umayyads did none of the three, and could not have.

They could not forge, because the doctrine already existed, was thirty years past its founder, and had witnesses. A counterfeit authority is caught by anyone who remembers the original; and everyone did.

They could not inherit, because the previous occupant of the interpretive position had not been destroyed. He had died. And what he had held was not an institution that could be stepped into but a fusion lodged in one person — the source of the revelation, the judge, the commander, all in a single man for ten years. When he died there was no priesthood on any payroll, no council that fixed the canon, no hierarchy with an apex, and therefore nothing to inherit except a vacancy that no procedure existed to fill.

And they could not simply redirect, because redirection requires a channel that already exists as an institution with somebody at the top of it who can be bought. The Persians had a *mowbedān mowbed*. The Romans had patriarchs the emperor appointed and councils he convened. Islam in 690 had neither, and no arrangement for producing either.

So they attempted a fourth thing, and it should be named plainly because the card does not yet carry it. **They tried to occupy the interpretive position in person.** Not to capture a clergy but to be one: *khalīfat Allāh*, appointed by God as the prophets were appointed, guarantor of the law, the man whose obedience is a duty of religion and not merely of politics. That is what the title on the dirham of 75 is claiming, what al-Walīd II's letter spells out at length, and what the executions of the Qadarīs were defending.

From which the finding follows, and it is the study's spine:

An apex can occupy the interpreter's position in person only where the doctrine is old enough that the position has already hardened into an office, and the interpretive class already draws its standing from the state. The Sasanian King of Kings could do it, because four centuries of royal patronage had produced a priesthood whose canon the crown had commissioned and whose hierarchy the crown maintained. The Roman emperor could do it, because he summoned the councils that defined the faith he professed. The Chinese emperor could do it most completely of all, because his examinations manufactured, certified, employed and pensioned every man in the empire qualified to say authoritatively what the canon meant, and a man who said the wrong thing lost his degree.

The Umayyad caliph could not, because the position he was claiming had never been an office at all. It had been a person; the person was dead; there was no chair to sit down in, only a claim to shout against everyone else who was shouting.

And the corollary is where the next module has to go. **An apex that claims the interpretive position without building the apparatus that certifies who else may hold it has not captured the seam — it has entered a competition.** It is a competition the ruler is uniquely badly placed to win, because in a young, textual creed his conduct is checkable, his rivals are literate, and every claim he makes about his own appointment is heard by people who remember what appointment used to look like.

The expenditure confirms it from the negative side, and the confirmation is the most useful single fact in the module. They spent lavishly, continuously, and at the top of their capacity — on *statements*. Mosaic, gold, marble, Byzantine craftsmen, a reformed coinage, the best poets in the language, chancery letters of enormous rhetorical ambition. And on the evidence there is no Umayyad school, no examination, no certificate, no state-funded body producing men authorised to say what the law was. They bought the sermon and never bought the seminary. Within a generation of their fall, the men who did decide what the law was had produced a body of doctrine that convicted them — and every count in it was drawn from the creed the dynasty had spent ninety years putting on its walls and its money.

A note on sources.

The exact primary quotations here are documentary and contemporary. The Dome of the Rock inscriptions are quoted from the standard editions — Max van Berchem's *Corpus Inscriptionum Arabicarum*, K. A. C. Creswell's plates, with Christel Kessler's 1970 reconsideration of the dedicatory panel — in the translation given in the Islamic Awareness edition, which follows Marmaduke Pickthall's rendering of 1930 for the Qur'ānic passages; Pickthall's translation is in the public domain. The alteration of the founder's name from ʿAbd al-Malik to al-Maʾmūn while the date of 72 was left standing is visible in the mosaic and is not disputed. The coin legends *amīr al-muʾminīn* and *khalīfat Allāh* are read from the standing-caliph dirham of 75 AH, with the shortened spelling attested on copper issues of the same period; the reformed aniconic dinars from 77 and dirhams from 78–79 carry the profession of faith, Qur'ān 112 in full, and Qur'ān 9:33.

The claim that the Umayyad caliph held religious as well as political authority rests on Patricia Crone and Martin Hinds, *God's Caliph* (1986), which is a contested book and is presented as such. Their strongest document, the letter attributed to al-Walīd II in 743, is generally accepted as a genuine product of the Umayyad chancery, and the pattern they identify — *khalīfat Allāh* throughout the late Umayyad chancery corpus, *khalīfat rasūl Allāh* nowhere — is not disputed even by scholars who reject their larger reading. Andrew Marsham's reassessment supplies the qualification adopted here, that *amīr al-muʾminīn* was the ordinary protocol title while *khalīfat Allāh* belonged to

courtly and panegyric registers; Crone's own later reattribution of the concept to Hellenistic and late Roman ideas of kingship is likewise Marsham's starting point and is noted rather than resolved. Robert Hoyland and Fred Donner have both pressed the point that the coins of 694–95 are the first documentary attestation of the title, which is why they carry the weight here.

The competing readings of the Dome's purpose are Ignaz Goldziher's (diversion of the pilgrimage, from al-Yaʿqūbī), Oleg Grabar's (competition with Christian Jerusalem), Amikam Elad's (the elevation of Jerusalem), Milka Levy-Rubin's (rivalry with Constantinople), and Nasser Rabbat's and Nuha Khoury's (a symbol of Umayyad rule); all are paraphrased and credited, and none is adopted. Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych's studies of al-Akhṭal at the court of ʿAbd al-Malik supply the reading of the panegyric as an instrument of legitimation.

The building history of the Damascus mosque — Hadad, Jupiter, the cathedral of St John the Baptist from 391, the shared use after 636, the purchase and demolition under al-Walīd I between about 706 and 715, the retained Roman temenos and the enshrined relic — is archaeological and architectural and is secure. The cost figures are not: Ibn al-Faqīh's six hundred thousand to one million dinars and the report of seven years' revenue are both tenth-century and are given as the range they are.

The narrative material on the Qadarī executions comes entirely through the later tradition, and the dates are unsettled: Maʿbad al-Juhanī is placed at about 699 or about 704, Ghaylān al-Dimashqī anywhere from about 725 to 743 under Hishām. The exchange attributed to al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, and the story of ʿAbd al-Malik's offer to al-Akhṭal, are anecdotes of a kind the tradition improves and are labelled as such in the text. The general warning stated at the outset of this study applies with particular force to this module: a dynasty's claims about itself, transmitted by the dynasty that destroyed it, survive chiefly where they could be used against it — which is one more reason why the coins, the mosaic and the standing walls do the load-bearing work here and the chronicles do not.

MODULE 4

SIXTEEN THOUSAND NAMES AND FOUR THOUSAND MEN

Module 4 · formation — how a belief fifty years old was installed in adults whose scepticism was fully grown, why the apparatus the state paid for reached only the people it had already won, and why the one cue that mattered was the one a ruler cannot buy

What was not yet possible

Begin with the arithmetic of generations, because it rules out the ordinary answer before the module starts.

The most powerful instrument any order has for installing a belief is a child. A person absorbs his world before he has the equipment to screen it: the authorities are simply the authorities, the group is simply his people, the sacred things are sacred in the way that the ground is solid, and by the time he is old enough to weigh any of it, the weighing is being done by a mind the belief helped build. Run that across three or four generations and an arrangement stops being an arrangement and becomes what there is. Every deep order in the record got there this way, and there is no shortcut, because the mechanism is time.

The Umayyads did not have any.

Muḥammad died in 632. ʿAbd al-Malik put up the Dome of the Rock in 692. Sixty years, which is one long lifetime and something under three generations. Count who was alive in the empire that year and what had formed them.

The overwhelming majority were the conquered: Coptic, Aramaic- and Greek-speaking Christians, Zoroastrians in Iran, Jews, Samaritans, Manichaeans, and they had been formed — as children, thoroughly, over centuries — into other things entirely. Nothing had been done to change that and, as this module will show, the state had a strong financial reason not to.

Of the conquerors, the first generation had been formed in pre-Islamic Arabia and had come to the movement as adults, some of them very late and some of them having fought it. The second had grown up during the wars. Only the third — men born in Kūfa and Baṣra and Fusṭāṭ in the 640s and 650s, reaching adulthood just as the Marwānids came to power — was the first cohort anywhere to have been raised inside the thing from infancy, and it was a cohort of a few tens of thousands in an empire of millions.

So the question this module has to answer is not the usual one. It is not *how did the order install its belief in each generation*, because there had barely been generations. It is: **what do you do when the belief is real, and load-bearing, and too young for the instrument that normally installs it?**

What the state built

The easy answer — that the Umayyads simply had no formation apparatus — is wrong, and the record is clear enough to say so. They built one. It had three parts, and it worked.

The first was the Friday sermon. In every city of the caliphate the congregational mosque held a *khuṭba* each week, and it was delivered from the *minbar* by the governor or a man he appointed. That is a political act performed in liturgical form, weekly, before the assembled male population, at the moment of the week when attendance was a religious obligation. The state owned that platform completely, and it used it.

It used it, from Muʿāwiya's reign onward, to curse ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib from the pulpit.

The practice is attested in Sunni and Shīʿī sources alike, which is the reason to credit it. Ibn Kathīr records that Marwān b. al-Ḥakam, governing Medina for Muʿāwiya, abused ʿAlī every Friday from the *minbar*, and that al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī sat and listened. Men were punished for refusing; ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd is recorded as beaten at al-Ḥajjāj's order for declining. And the practice was ended, universally in the tradition, by ʿUmar II. Its exact form, its universality and its continuity across sixty years are all disputed, and the round numbers that later writers attach to it — seventy thousand pulpits — are a flourish and should be dropped. What is not disputed is that a state instituted a weekly, public, compulsory liturgical curse on the Prophet's cousin and son-in-law, and that a caliph had to abolish it.

Look at what that instrument is. It feeds an authorised reading and starves a rival one, in the same act, in every city, once a week, at no marginal cost, using an obligation the population already had. It is as efficient a piece of formation as any order in this collection possesses. And its content tells you exactly which rival reading the state was starving.

The second was a class of paid preachers. The *quṣṣāṣ* — the word means storytellers, and the translation has done them a disservice — appeared around the middle of the seventh century as informal preachers who narrated, explained and exhorted in the mosques. They were the earliest exegetes and, in practice, the earliest historians. The Umayyad caliphs recognised what a man with a large regular audience was worth and made *qaṣaṣ* a state office: appointed, salaried religious functionaries in the mosque, whose duties included the public recitation of scripture, and whose position under the Marwānids was frequently combined with a judgeship. Lyall Armstrong's prosopography of more than a hundred of them shows a varied group with real learning, not a fringe.

So the dynasty did put religious instruction on the payroll. It employed preachers, appointed judges, and owned the pulpit.

The third was the calendar, and its shape can be read directly off the caliphate's own annals. The early chroniclers close each year with the same two notices: who led the pilgrimage, and who led the summer campaign against Byzantium. *Aqāma al-ḥajj fulān* — so-and-so established the pilgrimage. Those two items are the most consistently supplied information in the whole annalistic tradition, which tells you what the ritual year of this order actually consisted of: **the ḥajj and the raid.** One journey to Mecca and one march into Anatolia, every year, each under a commander the caliph named.

And inside that lies a small, sharp tell. For the Abbasid period the reports of who led the pilgrimage are near-unanimous across the early sources — one recent count found ten disagreements in a hundred and one notices. For the Umayyad seasons, the same sources report with significant variation. Somebody, at some point, became unsure or unwilling to say who had led the ritual year under the previous dynasty. It is the same operation performed on the Dome's dedication panel, carried out on a different medium.

What the state did not build

Now the three absences, and they are the module.

There was no school above the elementary one. The *kuttāb*, the primary school taking children at six or seven, was already established in the early Umayyad period, and the tutors of princes were men of standing at court. Above that: nothing. No seminary. No examination. No certificate. No state institution of any kind whose business was to produce, license, or dismiss a man qualified to say authoritatively what the law was. The dynasty appointed judges and could sack them; it never created the thing that made a man worth appointing.

There was no formation offered to the conquered at all. The state did not proselytise, did not translate, did not preach to Copts or Persians, and built nothing to catch a convert. It legislated in the opposite direction: around the year 700 al-Ḥajjāj expelled non-Arab converts from Kūfa and Baṣra back to the villages they had come from and went on collecting the poll tax from them, and the reason was arithmetic — a man who converts stops paying at the higher rate, and the treasury paid the army. Formation withheld from the majority is what the framework predicts of a conquest order, and the prediction holds here with a refinement worth stating: **this was not neglect. It was policy, with a number behind it.**

And the third absence is the strange one, because the belief spread anyway — and the men who spread it were drawn disproportionately from the class the settlement had shut out.

Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī, born in Medina in 642 and the most celebrated teacher of his generation, was the son of Persian freed slaves: a *mawlā*, a client, a man whose entry into the conquering society had run through a personal tie of dependence rather than through any register. He was not unusual. The sources for the period indicate that most of the religious scholars of that age were of that class.

Set that beside what the settlement had done. The register of stipendiaries was closed to a convert; the only door open to him made him a named Arab's hereditary client; and the doctrine he had joined told him the noblest man was the most God-fearing. What the framework predicts of a permanently excluded class is grievance, and grievance duly arrived. What it does not predict, and what happened here, is that **the**

excluded class walked into the one position the state had left vacant. Teaching required no appointment, no stipend and no ancestry. It required learning and an audience. A man barred from the roll lost nothing by taking it up, and the men who took it up became, within two generations, the people who decided what the roll's own doctrine meant.

Nobody designed that. It is what a position left open does.

The circle in the mosque

The physical arrangement deserves a sentence, because it is the whole political economy of Umayyad formation in one room.

The congregational mosque of Baṣra contained, at the front, a *minbar* from which the governor's man preached the authorised sermon on Fridays; and, on the floor, a circle. Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī sat in that circle and taught scripture, tradition, law, Arabic and rhetoric to whoever came; he kept a smaller and more demanding circle at his own house for asceticism. Such circles were, as the modern literature puts it, the nearest thing the age had to an institution of higher learning, and they cost the state nothing because the state was not paying for them.

The same building held both. The pulpit was the order's instrument and the floor was not, and they operated a few paces apart, on the same men, in the same week, for a hundred years.

Al-Ḥasan's own relation to power runs the length of the possibilities. He was known to governors and to the court, and caliphs are reported to have consulted him. He spent something like a decade in hiding from al-Ḥajjāj — roughly 705 to 714. He accepted the judgeship of Baṣra around 720, under ʿUmar II, and is reported to have served without taking a salary.

That last detail is the one to hold, and the rest of this module turns on it.

Two portraits of the good subject

The framework asks a study to reconstruct the portrait of the good subject — the virtues, duties and self-understanding that formation installed. This case supplies two, being installed simultaneously in the same rooms.

The state's portrait is legible from the pulpit and the coinage. The good subject obeys the commander of the believers, and the obedience is a duty of religion and not merely of politics. What happens, happens by God's determining, including who rules; a man who complains of the ruler's conduct is complaining of God's decree. The year has two obligations, the pilgrimage and the campaign, and both are led by men the caliph appoints. And, weekly, the good subject hears the community's enemies named from the pulpit and does not object.

The other portrait was forming on the floor of the same mosque, and its content is the reverse at every point that matters. The good subject lives in permanent anxiety about his own sins. He holds the world's goods lightly and distrusts men who do not. He is answerable for what he does, which means so is everybody else, which means so is the caliph. And he is obliged to say what is true in front of a tyrant.

That last pair is not a difference of temperament. It is the constitutional question of the caliphate conducted in the vocabulary of theology, and the state understood it perfectly: it killed men over it. Maʿbad al-Juhanī, who is named as the first to raise the question of human responsibility publicly, was executed around 699 or perhaps 704. Ghaylān al-Dimashqī, once a government official, was executed under Hishām at a date the sources cannot settle. A dynasty that thought it ruled by conquest would have had no reason to touch either man.

What the base population actually did

The framework's strongest single test of whether formation has produced conviction or performance is this: when the order's own authority makes a determination that costs nothing to ignore, what does the population *do*? A people merely performing compliance does not reliably change its conduct. A people for whom the belief is real does.

This case supplies the best such event in the collection, and it runs in two halves five years apart.

October 680. The partisans of ʿAlī in Kūfa wrote to Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī, the Prophet's grandson, inviting him to come and lead them against Yazīd, and pledging themselves. He sent an envoy, who reported favourably, and was then arrested and executed by the governor. Ḥusayn set out anyway. He was intercepted short of the city and killed on 10

Muḥarram with some seventy companions. Of the men who had written the letters, a handful were with him. The rest stayed in Kūfa.

That is formation failing the test, unambiguously and at the first attempt. A population that had said the words in writing, and then, when the words cost something, stayed indoors.

January 685. Four years and some months later, a number of those same men raised a rising. It had no candidate, no programme, and no political object whatever. Its purpose, as they stated it and as the sources uniformly record it, was to atone for what they had failed to do. They called themselves *al-Tawwābūn*, the Penitents. Their cry was يا لثارات الحسين — *yā la-thārāt al-Ḥusayn*, O avengers of Ḥusayn.

Their leader was Sulaymān b. Ṣurad al-Khuzāʿī, a Companion of the Prophet, an old man who had fought at the Camel and Ṣiffīn and Nahrawān. They had met secretly in his house since 680. They kept a register of those who pledged themselves, and sixteen thousand names went onto it. When Sulaymān called them out to Nukhayla in the winter of 684, about four thousand came. Promised contingents from Baṣra and al-Madāʾin did not arrive; a further thousand or so peeled away.

The three thousand who marched went by way of Karbalāʾ. They dismounted at the grave and wept there, and Sulaymān's recorded prayer was that they were of Ḥusayn's religion and the enemies of his murderers, and that having been denied martyrdom with him they might not be denied it after him. Then they marched north to meet a Syrian army reported at twenty thousand.

Before the battle at ʿAyn al-Warda, Sulaymān named his successors in command — Musayyab b. Najaba, then ʿAbd Allāh b. Saʿd, then ʿAbd Allāh b. Wāl and Rifāʿa b. Shaddād — in order. A commander who nominates four successors before an engagement has done the arithmetic and knows the answer. They fought for three days in early January 685, held their ground on the first, and were destroyed.

Read the two events together and you are watching something the historical record very rarely lets anyone watch: **a belief becoming load-bearing, inside a single decade, in adults, and measurable.** In 680 it could not get men out of their houses. In 685 it got four thousand of them into a battle they had already calculated they would lose, for an object that was purely expiatory. Nothing had changed about the doctrine in between. What had changed was that something had been paid for it in public.

And read the numbers honestly, because they are the honest measure. Sixteen thousand names on Sulaymān's register; four thousand men at the muster. Three in four who had put their names to it stayed home a second time. Even at the moment of its most spectacular demonstration, the formation was partial — which is what one should expect of a creed that had had fifty years and no children.

The resonance is worth a line. The Penitents kept a register, and it did the same thing the caliph's register did: it recorded a claim rather than compelling a body, and when the claim was called in, three-quarters of it was not there.

Reading formation against the framework

The framework holds that belief is installed through a small number of dispositions that were reliable in a small world and are forgeable at civilisational scale: we defer to the marks of legitimate authority; we conform to and stand with the group whose belonging we cannot do without; we place certain commitments beyond calculation and feel outrage when anyone tries to price them; we reason in story before we reason in argument. And underneath all four sits a condition rather than a disposition — that they are installed in the child before the vigilance that would screen them has matured.

In this case the condition was not available, and that is what makes the Umayyad settlement a natural experiment the collection has nothing else like. Almost nobody in the empire had been formed in this creed as a child, because there had not been time. So the belief had to be carried by the other four alone, in adults, against scepticism that was fully grown.

People are not credulous. They screen what they are told, weighing whether a source is competent to know and whether he has any interest in misleading them. But that screening cannot verify the world — nobody can verify more than a sliver of what he has to believe — so it reads cues that stand in for verification. And of those cues, the one that carries the most weight, because in a small world it is the hardest to fake, is whether the speaker *acts on his own belief at a cost to himself.* We trust the belief of those who pay for it. That is why the martyr persuades where the pamphlet does not.

From which the finding of this module follows, and it is the one the whole case exists to establish:

Where an order is too young for childhood formation to have done its work, the load falls almost entirely on costly display — and costly display is a currency the ruler cannot mint. He can buy every other cue. He cannot buy the one whose content is that he had nothing to gain.

Follow it through the case and it does not fail anywhere.

The ruler's expenditure is always confounded by his interest. ʿAbd al-Malik covered a shrine in Jerusalem with gold; al-Walīd spent something on the order of seven years' revenue on a mosque in Damascus. Both acts are fully compatible with deep personal piety, and both are fully compatible with a man buying a throne — and every observer knew it, which is why within a generation the same buildings were being cited against the dynasty as evidence of extravagance. The signal a ruler most needs to send is precisely the one his position makes unsendable, because the signal's entire content is *this man stood to gain nothing*, and a caliph always stands to gain.

The dissident sends it for free, and the poorer he is the better it works. Ḥusayn rode toward a city that had promised him an army and did not stop when the promise failed. Sulaymān b. Ṣurad named four successors before a battle and lost. A Khārijite would be cut down rather than concede that men might arbitrate what belonged to God. A teacher took the judgeship of Baṣra and declined the salary. None of those acts can be explained by advantage, which is exactly what makes them unanswerable.

The arithmetic is brutal and it should be stated as arithmetic. The Umayyads spent, on their two greatest monuments, sums no chronicler could count. Ḥusayn spent one afternoon and seventy men. Fourteen centuries later, the second purchase is still being cashed annually, by millions of people, in public, and the first is a building that the successor dynasty was able to re-label by changing one name in a mosaic.

Two corollaries follow and both matter for what comes next.

First, the levers a ruler can buy are exactly the ones that hold an army. Marks of authority, the pull of the group, a shared and flattering story — that is what gold, mosaic, panegyric and the weekly naming of enemies from the pulpit actually work on, and they work well. They held the Syrian *ajnād* for ninety years and they were not wasted. What they could not reach was the disposition that places a commitment beyond calculation, because in a young creed that disposition attaches to whoever has most visibly paid — and the state had put its money into buildings, poets and salaried

preachers, all of which are purchases, and purchases are the wrong instrument for that lever at any price.

Second, and this is where the case points forward: an order in this position is in a race, and the race is against its own creed's maturation. Formation will do its work in the end. A belief taught to enough children for enough generations stops being a claim and becomes the shape of the world, and this one did — completely, and at a scale few orders in the record have matched. The only question is whether the dynasty carrying it is still standing when the setting happens, and therefore whether it ends up inside the furniture or outside it.

The Umayyads held the apparatus for ninety years, and those ninety years were exactly the decades in which the belief was hardening from a movement's claim into a civilisation's ground. It hardened in circles the dynasty had not built, taught by men it had not seated and largely could not have seated, out of a text whose settling it had presided over but did not own, on a memory of martyrdom it had itself supplied. When the furniture set, they were on the outside of it — and the men on the inside had, by then, an account of what the law was that convicted them in every particular.

One further observation belongs on the card, because this case supplies something the others cannot. The framework holds that the trusted-information position is structural: it cannot be created or abolished, only occupied, crowded or captured. Nearly every case meets it already occupied. **Here we can watch it form** — and what the record shows is that it formed in the state's absence, because the state had already made its choice. It bought preachers and left lawyers alone. The consequence was a seam that was crowded from the moment it existed: Khārijites, ʿAlids, Qadarīs, Murjiʾīs, the traditionists of Medina, the circles of Baṣra and Kūfa, all contending from the first generation, none of them appointed and none removable. No later authority in that civilisation ever fully captured it. That is not a moral achievement and nobody intended it. It is what happens when a position opens in a world where the state is not paying, and it is worth stating plainly: **a seam that forms while the state is looking elsewhere is crowded by default, and crowding, once established at the founding, is very hard to undo.**

A note on sources.

The one exact primary quotation here is the Penitents' cry, *yā la-thārāt al-Ḥusayn*, as preserved in the narrative tradition; Sulaymān b. Ṣurad's prayer at the grave at Karbalāʾ is paraphrased rather than quoted, because the wording varies across the accounts.

Almost every fact in this module is narrative, and the narrative comes through the same filter that governs the whole study. Karbalāʾ, the Penitents, the cursing of ʿAlī from the pulpit, the executions of the Qadarīs and the life of al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī all reach us through compilations made a century and more after the events, mostly under the dynasty that destroyed the Umayyads, and in the case of Karbalāʾ and its aftermath through a tradition for which those events became foundational and liturgical. The numbers for the Penitents — sixteen thousand enrolled, about four thousand at the muster, about three thousand at the battle against a Syrian force put at twenty thousand — are of that character and are given as reported. The cursing of ʿAlī is attested in both Sunni and Shīʿī material, which is the reason it is credited here; its universality, its exact wording, its continuity and the frequently repeated figure of seventy thousand pulpits are not established, and the figure is not used. ʿUmar II's abolition of the practice is agreed across the tradition. The dates of the Qadarī executions are unsettled and are given as ranges.

Where documentary or institutional evidence exists it has been preferred. The institutionalisation of *qaṣaṣ* as a state office, and its combination with judgeship in the Marwānid period, follows Lyall Armstrong's prosopographical study of over a hundred *quṣṣāṣ* and Pavel Pavlovitch's work on the same body of material, with the observation that some early *quṣṣāṣ* were government-appointed functionaries whose duties included public recitation. The establishment of the *kuttāb* in the early Umayyad period, taking children at six or seven, is standard. The observation that the annalists close each year with the leaders of the pilgrimage and of the summer campaign, and that these notices are near-unanimous for the Abbasid period and significantly variant for the Umayyad seasons, comes from recent work collating the pilgrimage reports across Khalīfa b. Khayyāṭ and al-Ṭabarī; the divergence is the datum used here and the explanation offered for it is this study's inference, not the source's. Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī's clientage, his teaching circle in the Baṣra mosque, his period in hiding from al-Ḥajjāj in

roughly 705–714, and his unsalaried judgeship from about 720 are all reported in the biographical tradition and are consistent across it; the further observation that most religious scholars of that generation were of the client class is the standard reading of the biographical dictionaries and is credited as such. The cognitive account of how belief is installed and screened — the reading of cues in place of verification, and the weight carried by the costly display of a belief acted on at the holder's expense — is drawn from the collection's own foundational statement of the mechanism and is stated here in the case's own terms rather than by citation.

MODULE 5

A SAWYER FOR THE MOSQUE OF DAMASCUS

Module 5 · the cost column — why the ordinary subject complied; for whom the arrangement was genuinely a better bargain than the one it replaced; how long that lasted; and what the one great administrative apparatus of this state was actually built to catch

Four solidi, six months

Among the papyri recovered in 1901 from the rubbish of a small town in Middle Egypt — Kōm Ishqāw, the Aphroditō of the Greek documents — is a demand note from the governor of Egypt, Qurra b. Sharīk, addressed to the villagers. It is written in Greek, it is dated by the indiction, and it runs, in substance:

> Qurra b. Sharīk, to you, the people of the village of Aphroditō. Pay for the wages and supplies of a sawyer for work on **the mosque of Damascus** — for six months in the present eighth indiction — four nominal solidi only. Written the seventh of Hathyr, eighth indiction.

The Greek scribe, wanting a word for the building, wrote **μασγιδα** — *masgida*, the Arabic *masjid* in Greek letters, because his language had no term for the thing.

Hold that document, because it is this module in one sheet. A Coptic Christian village on the Nile, which will never see Syria, is assessed four solidi for half a year's wages and keep of one sawyer, so that al-Walīd's Great Mosque at Damascus can be built. The same archive carries requisitions of workmen and of sailors for the fleet, orders for acacia beams and palm-fibre rope, maintenance stipends for men sent away, and — in one case among the papers relating to the building programme — some forty-seven *litrae* of chains, fifteen or twenty kilograms of them.

The gold in the mosaic came from somewhere. This is one of the places.

There is no common man here

The framework asks why the ordinary subject's ledger comes out against revolt. Answered as a single question it produces a false answer, because this order governed at least five kinds of person and the ledger reads differently in each.

There is the cultivator — Coptic in Egypt, Aramaic-speaking in the Sawād, Iranian in the Iranian plateau — who is the overwhelming majority and whose position is the one the module chiefly concerns. There is the urban artisan and merchant in Alexandria, Damascus, Ctesiphon's successor towns. There is the clergy: bishops, priests and monks, Zoroastrian *mowbeds*, Jewish community heads, who occupied a specific and unusual position under this settlement. There is the *mawlā*, the convert, whose ledger is the worst of all and who will matter more than the others in what follows. And there are slaves, taken in enormous numbers in the conquests, about whom the Umayyad-period evidence is thinner than the later material and about whom this module will therefore say less than it would like.

Start with the largest group, and start with the side of the ledger that is usually skipped.

The benefit column, which is real

Something genuinely improved for a great many people, and it is not a defence of anything to say so.

For the Miaphysite Christians of Egypt and Syria — the majority in both — the state that had been persecuting them was gone. It is worth remembering what had been happening: a patriarch imposed from Constantinople holding civil and ecclesiastical power at once, a doctrinal formula they rejected pressed on them by decree, the head of their own church in hiding in the monasteries of Upper Egypt for something like thirteen years, and his brother tortured to reveal the hiding place and then drowned. What ended that was not a reform. It was a conquest, followed by a letter from the new commander guaranteeing the fugitive patriarch's safety and telling him to come back and administer his church.

That is a very large benefit, delivered immediately, at no cost to the recipients, and it was not an accident. The same guarantee — your churches, your bishops, your courts,

your own law in your own community — was extended to the Nestorians of Iraq, who had been suspect to the Sasanian state as a Roman fifth column, and to the Jews, who had been under legal disabilities in both empires. Each of these communities got, at a stroke, something neither of the previous orders had given them: an authority above them that did not care which Christology they held.

Add the exemption from military service, which the sources present as the poll tax's justification and which for a peasantry that had furnished conscripts and requisitions to two exhausted empires through a twenty-six-year war was not a small thing.

Add the archaeology, which is the least tendentious witness available. Egypt shows no destruction horizon at the conquest. Alexandria and Heliopolis show continuity of material culture rather than the layers a catastrophic sacking leaves. Landholding patterns and rural taxation persisted largely unchanged; documentary papyri show Christian elites still administering the collection of tax through the seventh century, in the same languages, on the same registers, from the same offices. Petra Sijpesteijn's reconstruction is that agrarian social relations were left substantially undisturbed, and that indigenous Christian elites were only sidelined over the course of the *eighth* century.

Which means that for the first two generations the honest description of the Arab conquest of Egypt, from inside an Egyptian village, is: **the tax collector is the same man, the language is the same, the rate is roughly the same, the church is safer than it was, and the emperor's men have stopped coming.**

Testing the mildness

The claim usually attached to this — that the early Arab burden was lighter than the late Byzantine or Sasanian one — is repeated so often that it should be tested rather than passed on, and when tested it does not come out clean.

What supports it: the surrender treaties fixed sums, sometimes at figures the communities themselves negotiated; the ruinous emergency requisitions of the last Roman-Persian war stopped; and the removal of a Chalcedonian establishment removed a whole channel of exaction alongside it.

What cuts against it: the neat schedules that make the case are not contemporary. Daniel Dennett's study of conversion and the poll tax showed decades ago that the tidy

figures — two dinars on every Egyptian, or the graduated forty-eight, twenty-four and twelve dirhams for rich, middling and poor — are the constructions of eighth- and ninth-century jurists arguing about their own century's law and reading it back onto ʿUmar. He noted that one cannot read al-Balādhurī for a quarter of an hour without finding a conquest settlement that some later caliph modified. Against that, a line of argument holds that comparison of pre-conquest and post-conquest documents shows the Arabs raising land taxation rather than lowering it. And the papyri themselves show the enforced rate varying locally rather than following any schedule.

So the honest report is: the relief was real, it was uneven, it cannot be quantified, and — this is the part that matters — **it did not last.** By the 720s the papyri are full of complaint, and by the 740s the Delta is in arms. What happened in between is the subject of the last section of this module.

The cost column, and the one thing this state was good at

Now the other side, and here the Egyptian evidence is so much better than anything else in the case that it has to carry the argument.

Ask the framework's question directly. Could the cultivator leave?

The answer is that the state had thought about almost nothing else. The dossier of Papas, pagarch of Edfu, already records government measures against fugitives in the 660s — within a generation of the conquest. From the archive of Qurra b. Sharīk, governing 709 to 714, the surviving documents include, by the titles their modern editors gave them, one *Concerning the Fugitives* and one *A Reclamation Respecting a Fugitive and the Fine*; a Coptic document from the same body lists fugitives by name and number; and the local scribe Theodore's dossier of 708–709 is composed almost entirely of guarantees about men — sailors for the naval service, workmen for the building projects — and about those who had run. Officials who failed to round up fugitives hiding in their districts were fined, and could be physically punished for it. And a taxpayer who wanted lawfully to travel outside his fiscal district had to obtain a *sijill*, a sealed permit; the surviving Egyptian examples run from roughly 717 to 751, and the Greek fiscal registers of the following century still carry marginal notes recording that a given taxpayer had fled or died, alongside lists of fugitives arrested.

Set that beside what the state did *not* build. There was no standing garrison in the Egyptian countryside. There was no political police. There was no inquisition, no examination of belief, no attempt to convert anybody, no interference in what was preached in a Coptic church or a fire temple. The Umayyad state in Egypt built one large, meticulous, empire-wide administrative apparatus, and its object was not the mind. It was the body's location.

This state did not need to know what its subjects thought. It needed to know where they were.

Where would he go?

Because the register only works if the doors are shut, and it is worth walking the doors one at a time.

Byzantine territory lay across a frontier the caliphate raided every summer as one of the two fixed items of its ritual year. The garrison cities were a real option for a while and were then closed by policy: around the year 700 al-Ḥajjāj expelled the converts who had come into Kūfa and Baṣra back to the villages they had come from and went on collecting the poll tax from them. The desert was the desert. The monastery was the best door available, since a man in orders had a claim to exemption — and the fiscal administration steadily narrowed that too, registering monks, taxing them and counting them, so that the church became one more instrument of enumeration rather than a refuge from it.

And then there was the marsh.

The Bashmūr, the waterlogged country of the northern Delta between the Rosetta and Damietta branches, was the one part of Egypt where the terrain defeated a tax collector: channels, reeds, islands, no roads, and a population that knew the water. And the Bashmūr is where, repeatedly across a century, the Egyptians refused to pay and fought when troops were sent.

Hold that against the rest of the province, because it is as close to a controlled experiment as this period offers. One country, one fiscal regime, one series of governors, one rate schedule, one religion among the taxed — and one region where exit was physically possible. That is the region that revolted, and the rest did not. The

Bashmurians were not more heavily assessed than the Fayyūm. They were merely harder to catch.

The framework holds that the extraction floor is set by two dials, the credibility of punishment and the availability of exit, and that where every door is shut the floor sinks toward the bone. Here the dial can be watched varying *inside a single jurisdiction*, and the risings map onto the dial rather than onto the rate.

The ledger of the man who did what he was told

One stratum's arithmetic is worse than the cultivator's, and it is the one that eventually matters most.

The convert — the *mawlā* — had done the thing the ruling doctrine invited him to do. What he received for it was this. He did not enter the register of stipendiaries, because that register recorded precedence in the movement's founding wars and he had none. He did not, in many places and for most of the period, stop paying: the fiscal administration went on assessing converts, and al-Ḥajjāj's expulsions were precisely a measure to make sure of it. He could not enter the conquering society as a member of a category, because the only available tie bound two individuals and never groups, arose on manumission or personal commendation, gave his patron rights of inheritance over his estate, and passed to his children.

So he had paid the price of leaving his own community — its protection, its clergy, its courts, its village — and had bought a hereditary personal dependence and, frequently, the same tax bill.

That is not a peasant's grievance. A peasant's grievance is about a rate. This is the grievance of a man who did exactly what the order's own doctrine told him to do and was cheated of the thing the doctrine promised, and it is a categorically more dangerous object, because it is expressed in the state's own language and cannot be answered by lowering anything.

And the class in which it accumulated was the class from which, as it happens, most of the religious scholars of that generation were drawn.

When it crossed the line

The arc from the mild settlement to the burning Delta can be dated with more precision than most things in this study, because it runs through administrative changes that left paper.

Through the seventh century the arrangement held on the terms described above: local elites collecting, in local languages, on inherited registers. From the 690s the centre began to reach further in — the *dīwāns* were converted to Arabic from about 697, and the caliphate started to want its provinces legible in a way the conquest generation had not required. Across the eighth century the Christian pagarchs and headmen were progressively displaced by Arab officials, and displaced most thoroughly in exactly the districts where Arab tribes had settled — where, on the quantitative work, poll-tax payments also ran higher.

Then the screw turns. ʿUbayd Allāh b. al-Ḥabḥāb, in charge of Egypt's finances from about 724 to 734, ran a new survey and pressed the assessment; the money was wanted for the frontier wars and, on the sources' account, for the officials themselves. From that decade the papyri carry Coptic complaint against Muslim tax collectors — arbitrary seizure, corruption — and the patriarchs steadily lose the standing to intercede.

And then the risings: 725, 739, and the great one of 749–750. In that last, the Bashmurians refused the tax and drove out the collectors; the governor Ḥawthara b. Suhayl seized the Coptic patriarch Khāʾīl and carried him to Rosetta and threatened his life; the Bashmurians answered by attacking and sacking Rosetta; and Marwān II, with an Abbasid army already coming down on him from the east, ordered the pillaging and razing of Coptic villages, churches and monasteries across the Delta. It was his last campaign in Egypt and it failed. Within months he was dead at Būṣīr.

The sequel is the framework's point about popular rising, delivered with unusual clarity. The Bashmurians did not take the apparatus, did not install anybody, and had no candidate. What they did was make the province expensive — and the next regime, arriving, granted them an amnesty and exempted them from tax for their first two fiscal years. **The rising changed the price of a policy, and the discount was paid out by**

whoever turned up next. That is cost, not authorship, and both halves of that sentence are true.

Reading the cost column against the framework

The framework locates any order on a gradient between two poles. At the cheap pole a belief has been driven so deep across generations that the governed hold the order up themselves and force withdraws to the margins. At the expensive pole the belief was never installed, the benefit column is empty, and the cost column must be held high by visible force and surveillance.

This order sits at neither pole and the reason is instructive. The Umayyads were not running a thin robe over the conquered — **they were running no robe over the conquered at all.** They did not ask the Coptic peasant to believe anything. They did not preach to him, did not school him, did not test him, and had a fiscal reason to prefer that he stay exactly as he was. And because they were not asking for his conviction, they did not need to police his mind, which is why the case shows no inquisition, no heresy trials against Christians, no thought-crime of any kind directed downward.

Which yields the refinement of a diagnostic the corpus already uses. Surveillance is the tell of a belief that never took — but the tell has to be read for its *subject-matter* as well as its object. This state watched, registered, listed and pursued with real administrative sophistication, and what it was tracking was **location**. Names against villages, permits to leave a district, lists of the absent, fines on the headman who let a man slip. Read the direction and the content together and they say something precise: *this order did not require its subjects' belief and did not seek it; it required their presence, and secured that instead.* A state that polices minds is trying to make people agree. A state that polices feet has given up on agreement and settled for arithmetic.

And from that follows the finding this module contributes, which is about the mildness and its expiry, and which generalises well beyond this case.

The relief a conquered population feels in the first generation is very largely a function of the conqueror's illiteracy, and it expires on the schedule of his learning.

A conqueror who captures a mature fiscal apparatus cannot at first operate it. He does not have the language, the cadastre, the local knowledge or the officials, so he leaves the incumbent collectors in place and takes what they bring him — which is, reliably, less than a state fully in command of its own registers would take, because the incumbents are the taxed population's own men and have a hundred reasons to under-report. Nothing about this is mercy. It is a lag. And it ends the moment the conqueror can read the books himself: he Arabises the registers, replaces the pagarchs, orders a fresh survey, and discovers a great deal of money that had been there all along.

In Egypt the whole sequence is datable. The lag runs from 641 to roughly the 690s. The conversion of the *dīwāns* to Arabic begins around 697. The displacement of the Christian administrative class runs across the following decades. The new survey and the hard assessment come with Ibn al-Ḥabḥāb from 724. The complaints appear in the papyri in the 720s and 730s. The risings follow from 725 and reach their height in 749. **Eighty years from conquest to conflagration, and the interval is the length of time it took the state to learn to read its own province.**

The consequence for method is worth stating flatly, because the corpus is going to meet it repeatedly. Every study that finds a conquest gentler than the order it replaced should ask, before crediting the conqueror with anything, whether it is looking at a policy or at a lag — and should then go and find the date when the lag ended. **Where the mildness has an expiry date, it was never a policy.** And a corpus that measures only the first generation will systematically rate the incompetent conqueror as the humane one.

One last observation, and it returns to the sawyer. The framework's usual instruments for weighing a cost column are rates and casualties, and both are thin here: the rates are contested and the killing was small until the very end. What the Aphroditō archive supplies instead is the thing those instruments miss entirely — a Christian village on the Nile paying four solidi for half a year of one man's labour on a building in another country, dedicated to a religion not its own, whose walls were being covered in an argument against its beliefs. Nobody was killed. No rate was raised. The transaction is entirely lawful and entirely documented, and it appears in no casualty figure and no tax schedule. **A cost column reconstructed only from rates and corpses will report this order as one of the mildest in the collection, and it will have missed the sawyer.**

A note on sources.

The one document quoted here is P.Lond. IV 1411, an order of Qurra b. Sharīk to the village of Aphroditō for the wages and supplies of a sawyer for work on the mosque of Damascus, six months at four nominal solidi; it is Greek, dated by indiction, and uses the transliteration *masgida* for *masjid*. It is rendered here in substance rather than word for word from the Greek. The other Aphroditō material referred to — requisitions of workmen and sailors, acacia beams and rope, maintenance stipends, and the consignment of chains — comes from the same archive, published in H. I. Bell's edition of the Greek papyri and Nabia Abbott's and Adolf Grohmann's of the Arabic; the documents styled *Concerning the Fugitives* and *A Reclamation Respecting a Fugitive and the Fine* are catalogued under those titles by their editors. The scribe Theodore's dossier of 708–709 and the Coptic list of fugitives are described in Jennifer Cromwell's work on Marwānid scribal networks. The travel permits, the fugitive lists and the marginal register notes on flight and death are surveyed in recent work on movement control in early Islamic Egypt; the surviving permits date between roughly 717 and 751. The dossier of Papas of Edfu supplies the 660s evidence. The fining and physical punishment of officials who failed to return fugitives is documented in the study of policing in the early Islamic Egyptian countryside in *Authority and Control in the Countryside*.

For the shape of the settlement on the ground, Petra Sijpesteijn's work on landholding patterns is the basis of the account given here — the continued role of Christian elites in tax collection through the seventh century, the substantial non-disturbance of agrarian relations, and their displacement over the eighth followed by Coptic tax revolts. Mohamed Saleh's quantitative work supplies the finding that poll-tax payments ran higher in districts where Arab tribes settled. The tax rates are given as contested and are not asserted: Daniel Dennett's *Conversion and the Poll Tax in Early Islam* (1950) is the classic demonstration that the two-dinar Egyptian poll tax and the graduated forty-eight/twenty-four/twelve dirham scheme are later juristic constructions rather than records of Umayyad practice, and the counter-argument that Arab land taxation ran above the pre-conquest level is noted alongside it. ʿAmr's letter

of safe conduct to the patriarch Benjamin is quoted in full elsewhere in this study and is here referred to only.

The Bashmurian risings are known from Coptic and Arabic material — the *History of the Patriarchs* above all, with Syriac corroboration in Dionysius of Tel-Maḥrē as transmitted later — and the number and dating of the eighth-century revolts cannot be fixed; the sequence used here (unrest from about 725, risings in 739 and 749–750, with the major later revolts of 767 and 831–832 outside this study's period) follows the standard reconstruction. The seizure of the patriarch Khāʾīl by Ḥawthara b. Suhayl, the sack of Rosetta, Marwān II's punitive campaign against Coptic villages and monasteries, and the Abbasid amnesty with two tax-free years are all reported in that material and carry its bias. The Umayyad-period evidence for the scale and use of slavery is materially thinner than the later Abbasid evidence, and this module has declined to fill the gap by importing ninth-century material; the omission is a limitation and is recorded as one.

MODULE 6

HIS LAND AND HIS DWELLING

Module 6 · extraction — how the surplus was taken, in what medium, from whom, and how the one clause in the ruling doctrine that admitted anybody opened a hole in the treasury that the state spent ninety years failing to close

The canal

In 641 or 642, within months of taking Egypt, ʿAmr b. al-ʿĀṣ had a canal re-excavated.

It was not a new canal. Trajan had cut the version that mattered, running from the Nile near the fortress of Babylon eastward to the Red Sea, and the Romans had widened and dredged it for centuries because it fed the machinery that moved Egyptian grain. By the 640s it had silted up. John of Nikiu, the Coptic bishop writing within living memory, records that indigenous conscripts did the digging. When it was open again it was called the Canal of the Commander of the Faithful, and one account has the first convoy through it carrying twenty ships of grain toward the Arabian coast; papyrological evidence from the end of the century confirms wheat still going out through the Red Sea port at Clysma.

For six hundred years the grain of the Egyptian Delta had gone north across the Mediterranean to feed Constantinople, on the *annona*, the state's requisition. Now it went east and south to feed Mecca and Medina.

Same fields. Same canal. Same conscripted diggers. Same grain. A different destination.

And in 754, when Mecca and Medina rose against him, the caliph al-Manṣūr closed the canal to cut off their supply — which establishes, as clearly as anything could, that the destination had been a policy all along and not a duty.

Begin here because it is the module's first proposition and the one that governs everything else in it. **This conquest did not build an extraction machine. It captured two of them, and re-pointed them.**

What they captured

Take the Persian side first, because it is the more elaborate and because two Arabic words come out of it.

The tax reforms begun under Kavād I and completed by Khosrow I in the sixth century had replaced a volatile assessment on annual harvest shares with something far more useful to a central government: a **fixed land tax**, *kharāg*, levied on surveyed land according to its potential rather than its actual yield; and a **graded poll tax**, *gezīt*, on males between twenty and fifty, at rates reported between four and twelve drachms according to wealth, payable quarterly. It came with a cadastre, an audit system, and provincial fiscal officers — the *āmārgars* — while collection on the ground ran through the local landholders and, for the minority communities, through their own community heads, who were accountable directly to the king.

Kharāg became *kharāj*. *Gezīt* became *jizya*. The etymology of the first is genuinely contested — some derive it from Middle Persian, others from Greek or Syriac through Aramaic, and the Arabic root appears once in the Qur'ān in an entirely different sense, meaning a reward — and the dispute should be flagged rather than settled. The shape of the institution, however, is not in dispute at all.

The Byzantine side handed over the same architecture in different vocabulary: a land tax and a capitation, assessed on cadastral registers, collected through pagarchs who were held personally liable for their districts' returns.

Now the structural observation, and it is the one that matters most in this module. **The Sasanian poll tax exempted the warriors, the priests, the scribes, the nobles and the officials.** It was, by design, a levy on the productive classes from which the fighting and administering classes were excused.

The Arabs did not invent a fiscal caste system. They found one, fully built, with the exempt category already cut — and they moved into it.

The framework holds that a conqueror who reaches for a flat charge on a countable object, a head or a hut or a roof, has found nothing worth capturing, and that the invented head tax is the tell of a thin or illegible fiscal substrate. This case confirms the rule from the other direction as strongly as any case could. The Umayyads invented nothing, because they had walked into the two most sophisticated revenue systems on

earth; and the whole of their fiscal history, for ninety years, is the story of learning to operate machinery somebody else had built.

The mechanisms, and what can be counted

Set them out honestly, with the numbers where numbers exist and with a warning where they do not.

The land tax on conquered soil, assessed by measurement in dirhams per *jarīb*, or by estimate of the yield, or as a fixed sum negotiated at surrender. In the Sawād the measured rate is reported reaching four dirhams per *jarīb* by the Umayyad period, and by the dynasty's later decades landowners are described as paying something between a quarter and a third of produce. The comparison usually drawn — that Khosrow had taken one dirham per unit for wheat or barley where the Arabs took four for wheat and two for barley, and that the conquerors therefore raised the land tax without exception — comes from the twentieth-century Soviet orientalist A. Yu. Yakubovsky, and it is a scholarly reconstruction rather than a document. It is the specific basis of the claim that the Arab burden was heavier, and it should be cited as what it is.

The poll tax on the protected communities. The tidy graduated schedules everyone quotes — forty-eight, twenty-four and twelve dirhams for rich, middling and poor, or one, two and four dinars — belong to eighth- and ninth-century jurisprudence and not to Umayyad practice; Daniel Dennett demonstrated decades ago that they are the jurists' canon read back onto ʿUmar, and the papyri show the enforced rate varying from district to district.

The tithe, at the lower rate, on land held by Muslims: *ʿushr*, and the alms, *ṣadaqa* and *zakāt*, which are a religious obligation of the believer rather than an imposition on a subject and were therefore never described in the same vocabulary at all.

The fifth of booty, the *khums*, reserved to the state from campaign. And here the tradition preserves a quarrel worth noting: a Syrian field commander returning from a summer campaign against Byzantium in 680, asked by Muʿāwiya where the fifth was, is reported to have answered that he had seen one of the emigrants walking on foot and had given him a mount — and to have said in verse that the Quraysh in Damascus were being given his booty while he abandoned his own men. The lines come through the narrative tradition and are of the kind it improves; what they attest, whether or not the

exchange happened, is that the *khums* was contested at the point of collection and that commanders sometimes refused it.

Requisition and labour. Directly and openly taken: the sawyer billed to the village of Aphroditō for six months' work on the mosque of Damascus, the sailors for the fleet, the workmen for the building programme, the acacia beams and palm-fibre rope, the conscripts who redug the canal.

And the monopolies of a state: the mint, which ʿAbd al-Malik reformed and centralised; the post; the tolls at the ports and the canal head, which the Romans had collected at the same places.

What would be accepted in satisfaction

The framework insists that the operative clause of any tax instrument is neither the rate nor the base nor the preamble, but what the collector will accept — because a tax payable in kind is revenue, while a tax payable only in the conqueror's coin, levied on a household that holds none, is a labour draft with the compulsion relocated out of the statute book and into the arithmetic of the family.

This case answers the question in a primary document. ʿUmar II's fiscal rescript, generally accepted as a product of the Umayyad chancery and quoted here in H. A. R. Gibb's translation, sorts the payers by how they pay:

> Those from whom the jizya tax is exacted are of three categories: the cultivator who pays his jizya from his produce; the artisan who produces his jizya from his earnings; and the merchant who lays out his money and pays his jizya from that.

The cultivator pays from his produce. The instrument contemplates three different media according to what the payer actually has, and it names the produce case first. The Sasanian precedent had run the same way: the amounts of the land and poll taxes were often stipulated in money, particularly in dirhams, but the actual payment was probably not, or at least not entirely, made in cash.

So the mechanism by which a tax becomes a labour draft without any law compelling labour is **not present here** — and that absence, correctly read, is not a finding about mildness. It is a finding about audiences, and it produces this module's contribution to the card.

> **The disguised labour draft is not a general technique of extraction. It is the technique of a conquest that must answer to a metropole in which forced labour is illegal. Where the extractor answers to no such audience, he does not launder the labour through a currency requirement — he requisitions it openly, by name and by trade, and the tax stays a tax.**

Nobody in Damascus was going to object to a requisition order, so nobody in Fusṭāṭ troubled to disguise one. The document goes out in Greek to a Coptic village and says, in substance: pay the wages and keep of a sawyer, six months, four solidi, for the mosque of Damascus. It gives no justification because none was expected. The Sierra Leone hut tax of 1898 and the Aphroditō requisition of 709 are extracting the same thing — a man's labour — and the entire difference between them is a fact about who was reading the paperwork at home.

The methodological consequence should be stated flatly, because it cuts against the grain of the instrument. **A corpus that identifies the disguised labour draft and scores it as evidence of severity must, in consistency, refuse to score its absence as evidence of mercy.** Where there is no metropolitan conscience to deceive, the labour is taken more directly, not less. The medium-of-payment test diagnoses laundering; laundering requires an audience; and the orders that had no audience simply took the man.

Flow or stock — and the answer is both, at different levels

The framework asks, before hunting a stable extraction point, whether the thing being taken is a flow or a stock, because the tunable equilibrium exists only for a flow. A rate can be eased when it crosses the revolt threshold. A stock cannot: you cannot take a third of a man's ground and leave him grazing the rest, and a land-taking order therefore produces revolt by its completion rather than sitting a tunable distance from it.

For the peasantry of Egypt, Syria and Iraq this order is unambiguously on the flow fork. The cultivator stayed on his land; the conquest wanted him there, alive, producing, and legislated at great length and considerable administrative expense to keep him exactly where the register said he was. There was no settler population to seat, no clearance, no logic of elimination anywhere in the record. Which is why the

equilibrium the framework predicts is visible and can be watched moving: the state pressed when it needed money for the frontier, eased where pressing did not work, and when it pressed too hard in the marshes of the Delta the marshes refused and got, eventually, an amnesty and two tax-free years from the next regime.

But run the same question one level up and the answer inverts. **The Sasanian crown lands were taken as a stock** — whole, at once, with no rate about it — and were then granted out as heritable estates, at the lower tithe rate, to the ruling family and its clients. So this order ran both forks simultaneously at two different heights of the hierarchy: a tunable rate on the peasantry, and outright expropriation of the previous dynasty's domain, with the second growing at the expense of the fund the first paid into. The peasant faced a tax he could sometimes get reduced. The Persian royal estate faced a taking, and the men who took it were the men who set the peasant's rate.

The story on each mechanism

The framework asks what legitimated each instrument, and the answers differ in a way that is itself informative.

The poll tax had a text: the Qurʾānic verse directing that the People of the Book be fought until they pay the *jizya* and are subdued. It also had a story — that the payment stood in place of military service, from which the protected were excused, and bought them protection. Both the text and the story were in circulation, and both were arguable.

The land tax had a doctrine: that the conquered soil was *fayʾ*, held for the whole community of Muslims including the unborn, and therefore permanently taxable in a character no change of owner or religion could alter.

The tithe and the alms had the strongest justification of all, being not impositions but obligations of the believer, described in an entirely different vocabulary and collected under a different name.

And the requisition of labour had nothing. No verse, no doctrine, no story, no justification of any kind. The order to Aphroditō does not explain itself; it states an amount and a purpose and a date.

Which is a small finding worth keeping: **the mechanisms carrying a doctrinal justification are the ones a subject might argue about, and the mechanism**

carrying none is the one nobody was expected to argue about. An order does not build a case for what it does not anticipate being questioned.

The hole in the treasury

Now the wound this module exists to trace, and it is the case's central fiscal fact.

The ruling doctrine admitted anybody who said the words. The fiscal system sorted revenue by category. Therefore every conversion moved a man out of a paying category and into a lighter one — and the movement required no organisation, no leader, no rebellion and no permission from anybody. The state could not forbid it without denying the creed it ruled by.

Watch what it did instead.

Around the year 700 al-Ḥajjāj expelled the converts who had come into Kūfa and Baṣra out of the garrison cities, sent them back to the villages they had come from, and went on taking the poll tax from them anyway. That is the crudest available fix: refuse to recognise the fiscal consequence of the conversion while recognising the conversion.

Meanwhile the revenue fell. Al-Balādhurī reports that the yield of the Sawād under ʿAbd al-Malik had dropped by something like sixty per cent from what it had been under ʿUmar. That figure is traditional, round, and comes from the usual filter; the direction, however, is corroborated by everything else in the record, including the administrative panic.

Then, between 717 and 720, ʿUmar II attempted the honest solution, and it survives in his rescript. It deserves quoting at length because it is the settlement's answer to its own contradiction, in the state's own words:

> Wherefore, whosoever accepts Islam, whether Christian or Jew or Magian, of those who are now subject to the jizya and who joins himself to the body of the Muslims in their abode, and who forsakes his abode wherein he was before, he shall enjoy all the privileges of the Muslims and shall be subject to all the duties laid upon them; and it is their duty to associate with him and to treat him as one of themselves. **But as for his land and his dwelling, they are of the booty which God has given to the Muslims collectively**; and had these persons accepted Islam thereon before God should give the conquest to the Muslims, it would remain their property; but it is now the booty given by God to the Muslims collectively.

Read it slowly, because it is a very elegant piece of legal engineering. The man converts and is free: all the privileges, all the duties, and an obligation on the community to treat him as one of themselves. **The field does not convert.** It was taken at the conquest, it belongs to the community in perpetuity, and its character is fixed regardless of who stands on it or what he believes. From 719 land in the *kharāj* category could not be moved out of it; a Muslim might lease such land, but he paid *kharāj* on it.

The person moves. The property stays. The revenue is saved.

And note the condition buried in the same clause: the convert must join the Muslims *in their abode* and forsake the abode he was in. That is precisely the migration into the garrison cities that al-Ḥajjāj had reversed by force twenty years earlier. Set the two acts side by side and the state is fighting itself inside two decades — expelling in 700 the men it invites in 719 — because the underlying problem admits no consistent answer.

ʿUmar II's reform was partly reversed by his successors under fiscal pressure, and when the system finally settled into the shape the jurists would canonise is genuinely disputed: Wellhausen and Becker placed the decisive reform in 738–748, Kosei Morimoto pushed it as late as 775–785, and the question turns on evidence too thin to settle.

The fight over what was left

The same shortage produced a quarrel at the top, and one administrative order from 720 contains the entire crisis in a sentence.

Maslama b. ʿAbd al-Malik was dismissed from the governorship of Iraq in 720 for failing to send surplus revenue to the caliph in Damascus. His replacement, ʿUmar b. Hubayra, introduced a rule: the right of the Arab tribesmen to the province's yearly revenue was limited to the amount of their stipends, and the surplus belonged to the central treasury.

That is the settlement and the extraction system colliding. The register's claimants had understood the province's revenue to be *theirs* — the whole point of the original arrangement was that the land tax paid the stipends. The centre now asserted that their claim stopped at the stipend figure and everything above it was Damascus's. Which is a perfectly reasonable position for a treasury to take, and it converts a conquest caste's

entitlement into a salary cap, in writing, in the middle of the fiscal squeeze that conversion had opened.

And the money did not reliably move even so. Al-Yaʿqūbī reports that Egypt remitted very little to Muʿāwiya even under ʿAmr, and that after ʿAmr's death it continued to spend its revenue on its own military rather than sending it. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Marwān governed Egypt for twenty years as his brother the caliph's viceroy, and when ʿAbd al-Malik demanded the province's revenue he simply did not send it, replying that his brother was making his old age unpleasant.

So the shape of the surplus's movement is not a funnel. It is a set of provincial establishments each consuming most of what it raised, a centre that had to ask and could sometimes be refused, a family steadily converting revenue into heritable estate at the tithe rate, and a stipend roll whose claimants were being told, in 720, that their share had a ceiling.

Reading extraction against the framework

Three things follow, and the first is the contribution.

On the medium of payment. The card's finding stands — a tax payable only in the conqueror's coin, on a household that holds none, is a labour draft — but it needs a precondition attached to it, because this case shows what the technique is *for*. It is a laundering operation, and laundering requires somebody to launder for. A nineteenth-century colonial state had to convert forced labour into taxation because forced labour was illegal at home, nameable, and would have been resisted by the metropole's own voters, while taxation was lawful and familiar and passed unexamined. The Umayyad state faced no such audience and therefore performed no such conversion: it named the trade, the term and the price, and sent the order. **The absence of a disguised labour draft is therefore evidence about the extractor's audience and not about his restraint, and the corpus must not read it as mildness.**

On the invented head tax. The card holds that a conqueror who invents a flat charge on a countable object has found nothing to capture. This case is the strongest available confirmation from the other side — and it adds a mechanism the card does not yet state. A conqueror who captures a working fiscal system does not merely capture its rates and its registers. **He captures its exemption categories, and he**

installs himself in one of them. The Sasanian system had excused warriors, priests, scribes and officials from the poll tax. The Arab conquerors kept that architecture intact and became the warriors. Which means the boundary of the Umayyad settlement — the line between the men who paid and the men who were paid — was inherited from the order it replaced, and was a *fiscal* category before it was ever an ethnic one. Anybody looking for the origin of the Arab/non-Arab distinction in a doctrine of Arab supremacy is looking in the wrong archive. It is in Khosrow's cadastre.

And on the wound itself, which is where this study has been heading since the settlement module. A fiscal system that sorts its subjects by a criterion the ruling doctrine says anybody may cross is not a stable system, and no administrative fix can make it one.

The Umayyads tried three in twenty years. Refuse the consequence and drive the converts home; that failed, and produced a grievance in the garrison cities. Tax them anyway; that worked fiscally and was indefensible doctrinally, which is precisely why it was cited against the dynasty afterwards. And finally, separate the man's status from the land's: let him convert, hold the field to its category, and save the revenue.

The third fix worked. It is the one the jurists eventually canonised and the one the Abbasids inherited. And it worked by quietly withdrawing the material content of the thing the doctrine had promised — so that a man who converted got the privileges and the duties and the community's obligation to treat him as one of themselves, and went on paying on his ground at the rate of a conquered unbeliever.

The treasury was saved by confirming the grievance. That is not a paradox and it is not even unusual; it is what a state does when it has to choose between a doctrine and a payroll. What is unusual here is that the doctrine in question was the state's own title to rule, that it was young enough for everyone to remember what it had said, and that the men who would eventually write down what it meant were disproportionately drawn from the very class the fix had disappointed. The debt was paid. The charge sheet got longer.

A note on sources.

The exact primary quotations are from ʿUmar II's fiscal rescript, in H. A. R. Gibb's translation ("The Fiscal Rescript of ʿUmar II," *Arabica* 2, 1955) — the three categories

of *jizya* payer, and the clause on the convert and his land. The text's Umayyad-era authorship is accepted on the grounds set out in recent work on it: the fiscal system it presumes was abolished immediately after the Abbasid accession, it does not pander to later theological concerns, and its vocabulary is archaic, using *ahl al-jizya* rather than *ahl al-dhimma* and treating *kharāj* and *jizya* interchangeably. The requisition order to Aphroditō for a sawyer's wages and keep for work on the mosque of Damascus is P.Lond. IV 1411 and is discussed in full elsewhere in this study.

The Sasanian fiscal reform of Kavād I and Khosrow I — the fixed land tax *kharāg*, the graded poll tax *gezīt* on males of twenty to fifty at four to twelve drachms paid quarterly, the exemption of warriors, priests, scribes, nobles and officials, and the observation that amounts were stipulated in dirhams while actual payment was probably not entirely in cash — follows the *Encyclopaedia Iranica* articles on Khosrow I's reforms and on the Sasanian fiscal system. The Sasanian sources are themselves problematic, deriving through several lines of transmission from the lost *Xwadāy-nāmag* and reaching us chiefly through al-Ṭabarī and other Arabic writers, which is a filter of the same kind this study reports elsewhere. The etymology of *kharāj* is disputed between Persian and Greek/Syriac-through-Aramaic derivations and is left open.

For the canal: John of Nikiu's *Chronicle* reports the re-excavation by indigenous conscripts; Peter Sheehan and Alison Gascoigne have worked on the relocation of the Nile entrance to Trajan's canal, and Petra Sijpesteijn on the late seventh-century papyri attesting wheat shipped through Clysma. The figure of twenty ships in the first convoy is traditional. Al-Manṣūr's closing of the canal in 754 comes from the narrative sources.

Contested and reconstructed figures are flagged as such throughout and none is asserted: the graduated poll-tax schedules (48/24/12 dirhams, or 1/2/4 dinars) are later juristic canon, on Daniel Dennett's demonstration in *Conversion and the Poll Tax in Early Islam* (1950); the four dirhams per *jarīb* in the Sawād and the quarter-to-a-third of produce in the later Umayyad period are reported rates rather than measured ones; the comparison with Khosrow's one dirham per unit, and the conclusion that the Arabs raised land taxation without exception, is A. Yu. Yakubovsky's reconstruction and is credited to him; al-Balādhurī's sixty per cent fall in the Sawād's revenue under ʿAbd al-Malik is a traditional figure whose direction, not whose magnitude, is used here. The dating of the final settlement of the *kharāj* system is unsettled between

Wellhausen and Becker (738–748) and Kosei Morimoto (775–785). The verses attributed to a Syrian commander refusing the *khums* to Muʿāwiya in 680, and ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Marwān's reply to his brother about his old age, are anecdotes from the narrative tradition and are labelled as such in the text; the underlying pattern — provinces consuming their own revenue and centres unable to compel remittance — is corroborated by al-Yaʿqūbī and al-Ṭabarī independently and by the 720 order of ʿUmar b. Hubayra capping the tribesmen's claim at their stipends, which is the load-bearing datum in that section.

MODULE 7

I FEAR THE LOSS OF KNOWLEDGE

Module 7 · information and suppression — what this order policed, what it left entirely alone, the one thing it ever funded inside the seam, and why paying for the collection of a doctrine's evidence without owning the men who would say what it meant was the most expensive act of the dynasty's ninety years

What was never policed

Start with the absences, because they are large and they are not what the ordinary account of this dynasty would predict.

There was no inquisition. In ninety years of ruling the largest Christian population and the entire Zoroastrian population on earth, the Umayyad state did not try a single person for heresy against Islam who was not already a Muslim. It ran no index of prohibited books. It did not suppress the Coptic liturgy, the Syriac schools, the Jewish academies of Iraq, the Zoroastrian priesthood, or the Nestorian catholicos. It did not require conversion, did not preach to the conquered, did not translate its scripture for them, and had a standing fiscal reason to prefer that they remain exactly what they were. The Chalcedonian and Miaphysite hierarchies went on disputing Christology under Umayyad rule with a freedom neither had enjoyed under the emperors, for the simple reason that the state did not care which of them won.

Nor was there much policing of Islamic teaching as such. Al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī ran an open circle in the mosque of Baṣra for decades, expounding scripture, tradition, law and Arabic to whoever sat down. He was not licensed and he was not censored. Ideas of every kind were being argued in those circles, and the state, as a general matter, did not attend.

Set that beside the Qing state which examined, certified and could de-license every man in the empire qualified to say what the classics meant, or beside the Sasanian order

with its state-endowed priesthood and its royally commissioned canon, and the Umayyad case looks, at first sight, like the loosest information regime in the collection.

It was not. It was the narrowest, which is a different thing. And the shape of what it did police is the most diagnostic evidence in this study of what the dynasty thought it stood on.

What was policed, and it is one thing

Three named episodes, three decades apart, three different provinces, and one subject.

Ḥujr b. ʿAdī al-Kindī, executed in 51/671. He was a Companion of the Prophet. He had commanded the right wing at Jalūlāʾ in 637 and fought at Qādisiyya; he had been at the Camel, at Ṣiffīn and at Nahrawān on ʿAlī's side. What he did in Kūfa under the governorship of Ziyād b. Abīhi was to praise ʿAlī publicly and object, from the floor of the mosque, to the cursing of ʿAlī from the pulpit. Ziyād had him and a group of his followers arrested and sent to Damascus, and the charge in the governor's covering letter is worth having exactly: that they had **defied the *ijmāʿ*** — the community's consensus — **about cursing Abū Turāb**, and refused the caliph's order.

Read that clause. A state-mandated weekly liturgical curse, instituted by a caliph within living memory of the man being cursed, is here being described by the state's own governor as the consensus of the Muslim community, and dissent from it as a religious offence rather than a political one. Muʿāwiya hesitated, according to the reports, and Ziyād wrote back that releasing Ḥujr would mean the corruption of Iraq. Ḥujr and several of his companions were killed at Marj ʿAdhrāʾ outside Damascus. The tradition preserves his request that his chains not be removed nor his blood washed, because he intended to bring the case against Muʿāwiya on the day of judgement, and it has ʿĀʾisha reproaching Muʿāwiya for the killing and Muʿāwiya himself uneasy about it on his deathbed. Those last details are the kind the tradition improves; the execution and its grounds are attested in Sunni and Shīʿī material alike.

Maʿbad al-Juhanī and Ghaylān al-Dimashqī, executed around 699 or 704 and at some point under Hishām respectively, for the doctrine of human responsibility — that a man's evil acts are his own and not God's decree, from which it follows that a caliph's evil acts are the caliph's own. Ghaylān had been a government official and had

written to ʿUmar II urging reform. He was killed for a proposition in metaphysics whose entire political content is that the ruler is answerable.

Saʿīd b. Jubayr, beheaded on al-Ḥajjāj's order in Shaʿbān 95, about April or May 714. His biography is the module in one life, and it should be given whole. He was born in Kūfa around 665, of Abyssinian origin, a freed slave and the client of a clan of the Banū Asad — which is to say a *mawlā*, a man from the class the settlement's register did not seat. He learned from Ibn ʿAbbās and became the foremost Qurʾānic exegete of his generation; Ibn ʿAbbās is said to have redirected Kufans who came to him for a ruling by asking whether Saʿīd b. Jubayr was not among them. **The caliph ʿAbd al-Malik asked him to write a book of Qurʾānic commentary.** He then joined Ibn al-Ashʿath's rising, in a formation the sources call the Battalion of the Reciters — the *qurrāʾ*, drawn up as a unit — and fought the caliph's Syrian army at Dayr al-Jamājim in 701. After the defeat he hid for twelve years, in Isfahan and Qum, coming out twice a year to make the pilgrimage. He was arrested on one of those journeys and sent to al-Ḥajjāj, who questioned him and had him killed.

A former slave becomes the leading interpreter of the scripture; the caliph commissions a book from him; he takes up arms against the caliph's governor in a battalion of reciters; he hides for twelve years; he is beheaded. Every relation between this state and the men who held its doctrine is in that sequence.

The two valves

The framework asks a study to find the seam and show it working its two valves — the inflow, which feeds an authorised reading, and the outflow, which starves a rival one. Both are unusually visible here, and both behaved unusually.

The outflow valve was a name, not a doctrine. What this state suppressed was not a heresy, a book or a school. It was a person: ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib, cursed from the pulpit of every congregational mosque in the empire, weekly, at the Friday prayer, from Muʿāwiya's accession until ʿUmar II abolished it — something close to sixty years. Men were punished for refusing to join in; ʿAṭiyya b. Saʿd was beaten at al-Ḥajjāj's order for declining, and Ḥujr b. ʿAdī was killed for it. The frequently repeated figure of seventy thousand pulpits is a later flourish and is not used here; the practice's precise form,

universality and continuity are all disputed; but that it existed, and that a caliph had to end it, is agreed across the tradition's opposing camps.

Now judge it as an instrument. **An outflow valve that names its target broadcasts the target.** The cheapest form of suppression is the one the framework identifies as most effective and least visible: the alternative simply left untaught, so that a population never encounters the rival reading at all and no martyr is created. The most expensive form imaginable is a compulsory weekly denunciation, by name, delivered to the entire adult male population of an empire, for two generations.

What that policy guaranteed was that every Muslim from Merv to Qayrawān heard the name of ʿAlī b. Abī Ṭālib spoken from the pulpit fifty times a year for sixty years, in a context that told him unmistakably which name the state was afraid of. It could not have advertised the alternative more efficiently if it had tried. And when it was withdrawn — by a caliph the tradition remembers as the one good Umayyad — the withdrawal was itself read as an admission, and remembered as one.

The inflow valve, however, is where the seed's expectation breaks and where this module's finding lives.

What the state paid for

They did build an inflow valve. Twice, and the second time on a scale nobody expects of them.

The first was the corps of preachers. The *quṣṣāṣ* had appeared as informal narrators and exhorters around the middle of the seventh century; the Umayyad caliphs recognised what a man with a large regular audience was worth and made *qaṣaṣ* a state office — appointed, salaried functionaries in the mosques, whose duties included the public recitation of scripture, and whose position under the Marwānids was frequently combined with a judgeship. That is a straightforward inflow valve, and it worked at the level it operated on.

The second is ʿUmar II's, and it is the most consequential thing the dynasty ever did.

Between 717 and 720 he ordered the systematic collection of the sayings and conduct of the Prophet. He wrote to Abū Bakr b. Muḥammad b. Ḥazm — a Medinan jurist whom he had also appointed governor of Medina, so that the collector was

simultaneously the state's man in the city — with an instruction the tradition transmits in wording that varies, but whose substance is stable:

> Whatever sayings of the Prophet can be found, write them down, **for I fear the loss of knowledge and the disappearance of the learned**; and accept nothing but the tradition of the Prophet; and let people make knowledge public.

He directed Ibn Shihāb al-Zuhrī and Saʿd b. Ibrāhīm to compile the material into books for distribution across the empire. He specified particular transmitters whose material he wanted secured, including ʿAmra bint ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, ʿĀʾisha's student, whose narrations he required to be sent to him in writing. He appointed teachers to instruct the Bedouin in the Qurʾān, ordered weekly sessions of tradition in the Ḥijāz, and sent scholars into Egypt and North Africa to teach.

That is a state entering the seam with money, authority and a policy — and it is the only sustained attempt at it in ninety years. It has been remembered ever since, in the Muslim tradition, as the beginning of the written hadith corpus.

What the state did not pay for

And now the thing that makes this module.

The commission funded the **collection** of the material. It did not fund, and no Umayyad ever funded, the body that would decide what the material *meant*, or which men were entitled to say so.

There was no examination. There was no certificate. There was no school of law under state patronage, no licensing of jurists, no synod, no council, no office with authority to declare a reading authoritative or a scholar disqualified. The state hired judges and could dismiss them; it never created the thing that made a man worth hiring, and it never acquired the power to unmake his standing. Al-Zuhrī's authority came from his own transmission and travelled with him. The caliph could employ it. He could not confer it and he could not withdraw it.

So consider what was actually being assembled at state expense, and by whom, and for use by whom.

The material being collected was the record of what the Prophet had said and done — which is to say, **the standard against which any ruler's conduct could be**

measured, gathered, verified, written down and distributed across the empire on the caliph's instruction and at his charge. The men gathering it were scholars the state paid but did not certify, drawn disproportionately from the client class the settlement had excluded, working in circles the state had not built and could not dissolve. And within a generation of the dynasty's fall, the corpus assembled under that commission would be the body of material from which the case against the Umayyads was constructed — usurpation, the killing of the Prophet's grandson, the sack of Medina, the bombardment of the Kaʿba, the wine, the Arab aristocracy in place of a community of believers. Every count drawn from the record the state had paid to have written down.

Which yields the finding, and it is the sharpest instrument this study has produced:

> **A state that funds the collection of its doctrine's evidence without owning the body that interprets it has not captured the seam. It has armed it.**

The contrast that makes the point can be stated in one sentence, and it is worth stating flatly because two states got the same problem and answered it opposite ways. The Chinese imperial state paid for almost nothing in the education of its scholars — the candidates and their families bore the whole cost of the books and the decades of study — and paid for exactly one thing: **the certificate**, which it manufactured, conferred, and could revoke, so that every man in the empire authorised to say what the canon meant held his authority from the state and could lose it. The Umayyad state did the reverse. It paid for the corpus and never issued a certificate. One bought the credential and let the students pay for the books; the other bought the books and never issued a credential. The first held a borrowed doctrine for two hundred and sixty-eight years. The second was convicted out of its own commissioned collection within a generation.

The record of the past

The seed for this study predicted that a dynasty accused of usurpation would police *history*, and asked what the Umayyads did about the record of the succession, the first civil war and Karbalāʾ.

The honest answer is that we cannot see, and that the reason we cannot see is itself the evidence.

There is no surviving trace of an Umayyad apparatus for controlling the historical record. There is no bureau of annals, no official chronicle, no dynastic history commissioned in Damascus, nothing corresponding to the Chinese practice by which each dynasty wrote its predecessor's history as the formal act of receiving the mandate. What the Umayyads produced about themselves was architecture, coinage and panegyric — statements of present claim rather than accounts of the past.

But the record of that period did not reach us unedited, and the editing is visible in three places.

The dedication panel of the Dome of the Rock names al-Ma'mūn as the builder and gives the date as the year seventy-two, which is a hundred and twenty years before he was born; the founder's name was cut out and the Abbasid caliph's set in, and whoever did it left the number.

The early annalists close each year with two notices, the leader of the pilgrimage and the leader of the summer campaign. For the Abbasid period those notices are near-unanimous across the sources — one recent collation found ten disagreements in a hundred and one entries. For the Umayyad seasons the same sources diverge significantly. Somebody, later, became unsure or unwilling about who had led the ritual year under the previous dynasty.

And the whole narrative tradition on which any account of this period must rest was compiled a century and more after the events, under the regime that had hunted the dynasty to death, by men with a professional stake in how it looked.

From which a methodological point the corpus should carry:

> **Where an order's record was edited by its destroyer, the absence of evidence of censorship is not evidence of its absence — and the destroyer's own editing is the best available proof that the material was worth editing.**

The Abbasids policed the history of the Umayyads. Whether the Umayyads policed the history of anything is a question their successors' scissors have made unanswerable.

The cost of suppression against the cost of accommodation

The framework asks the comparison directly, and here it comes out with unusual clarity, because this order made the calculation in almost every domain and made it the same way each time.

Accommodation was extraordinarily cheap. Leaving the Copts their church cost nothing and produced revenue. Leaving the Nestorians their catholicos bought a community that had been persecuted by the Sasanians. Leaving the Zoroastrian priesthood alone avoided a war of religion in Iran that the state had no capacity to fight. Leaving the Jewish academies alone cost nothing at all. In every case the state accommodated, and in every case the accommodation was profitable, uncontroversial and durable — and it is why the arrangement with the non-Muslim communities outlived the dynasty by a millennium.

Suppression was expensive and it was narrow. It was applied to precisely one question — who had the right to rule and by what warrant — and each application cost the dynasty a martyr whose name outlasted the men who ordered the killing. Ḥujr b. ʿAdī is a Companion of the Prophet executed for objecting to a curse. Saʿīd b. Jubayr is the leading exegete of his generation, once commissioned by a caliph, beheaded by a governor. Ghaylān al-Dimashqī is a state official killed for saying that men are answerable for their acts. Ḥusayn b. ʿAlī is the Prophet's grandson. Every one of them became a permanent charge.

Which suggests a rule about the whole arrangement: **an order that accommodates everything except the question of who rules will find that the question of who rules is the only thing anyone talks about.** By removing every other subject from the agenda — by declining to fight about Christology, or ritual, or language, or law, or the shape of anyone's community — the Umayyads produced a public conversation with exactly one item on it, and it was the item on which their own position was weakest and their conduct most checkable.

Reading the seam against the framework

Three findings, and the second is the contribution.

On the crowded seam. The framework holds that the trusted-information position is structural: it cannot be created or abolished, only occupied, crowded or captured. This case shows it *forming*, and forming crowded — Khārijites, ʿAlids, Qadarīs, Murjiʾīs, the traditionists of Medina, the circles of Baṣra and Kūfa, all contending within the first two generations, none appointed and none removable. That crowding was not a liberty anybody granted; it was the residue of a state that had chosen to pay preachers and ignore lawyers. And once a seam is crowded at its founding, no later authority captures it: the miḥna, the Abbasid attempt a century afterwards to compel the scholars to a doctrine on the createdness of the Qurʾān, failed, and its failure settled the question for a millennium. **A seam that forms while the state is looking elsewhere stays crowded, because the moment for capturing it is the moment it forms.**

On what the state bought. The contribution stands as stated above and is worth repeating in its operative form, because it gives the corpus a test it can run on any case. Ask not whether the state funds religion — most do — but *which half* of the interpretive apparatus it funds. **Funding the corpus without funding the credential is arming the seam. Funding the credential and letting the corpus look after itself is capturing it.** The first produces a body of authoritative material in hands the ruler cannot reach; the second produces a body of authorised men whose standing the ruler issues and can revoke, and who will therefore find, on the whole, that the canon means what the ruler needs it to mean. The Umayyads did the first and were destroyed by it within thirty years. The Chinese state did the second and ran a doctrine that contained nothing of its own for two and a half centuries.

And on the prosecutions as an audit. The framework holds that a catalogue of an order's prosecutions maps its load-bearing claim, because a state polices what it thinks it stands on. Run the catalogue here and it returns a single answer with no noise in it. This state killed men over the cursing of ʿAlī, over the doctrine that God had decreed its authority, and over armed refusal of its right to command — and over nothing else at all. It did not police belief, morals, ritual, language or the reading of the text. Which is as clear a statement as an order ever makes about where it thought its own weight rested: not on conquest, not on lineage, not on the consent of the conquered, but on the proposition that its right to rule was a matter of religion — the one proposition

that its own funded collection of the Prophet's words was quietly, expensively and irreversibly making it possible to test.

A note on sources.

The one primary text quoted is ʿUmar II's instruction to Abū Bakr b. Muḥammad b. Ḥazm to write down the sayings of the Prophet. It is a report transmitted in the tradition rather than a surviving document; the wording varies between transmissions and the version given here is a composite rendering of its stable substance, marked as such in the text. The attribution of the first state-sponsored collection to ʿUmar II, and the naming of Ibn Ḥazm, al-Zuhrī and Saʿd b. Ibrāhīm as those tasked with it, is the standard account within the Muslim tradition and is repeated across the classical literature; a sceptic would note that a tradition wishing to date the written corpus early and to attach it to the one Umayyad it approved of had motive to say exactly this, and that caution should be held alongside the report. The associated details — the direction that ʿAmra bint ʿAbd al-Raḥmān's material be sent in writing, the appointment of teachers for the Bedouin, the weekly sessions in the Ḥijāz, and the dispatch of scholars to Egypt and North Africa — come from the same body of material.

The three suppression episodes rest entirely on the narrative tradition and carry its bias, which in this case runs against the Umayyads on every count. Ḥujr b. ʿAdī's execution at Marj ʿAdhrāʾ in 51/671, the charge of defying the *ijmāʿ* on cursing ʿAlī, Ziyād's warning that releasing him would corrupt Iraq, and Muʿāwiya's reported hesitation are attested in Sunni sources — al-Ṭabarī, Ibn al-Athīr, Ibn Kathīr, Ibn ʿAsākir — as well as Shīʿī ones, which is why they are credited here; the deathbed remorse and ʿĀʾisha's reproach are of the improvable kind and are labelled as tradition. Saʿīd b. Jubayr's clientage and Abyssinian origin, his standing as an exegete, ʿAbd al-Malik's request for a commentary from him, his presence with the reciters at Dayr al-Jamājim, his twelve years in hiding in Isfahan and Qum, and his execution in Shaʿbān 95 (April–May 714) are consistently reported, though his age at death and the exact date are disputed between Shaʿbān 95 and Ramaḍān 94. The dates of the Qadarī executions cannot be settled and are given as ranges. The figure of a hundred and twenty thousand killed by al-Ḥajjāj across his career is a later chronicler's total, is doubted by modern analysis, and is not used.

The institutionalisation of *qaṣaṣ* as a state office follows Lyall Armstrong's prosopography and Pavel Pavlovitch's work; the practice of cursing ʿAlī is discussed with the same caveats stated elsewhere in this study, and the figure of seventy thousand pulpits is rejected. The observation on the divergence between Abbasid and Umayyad pilgrimage-leader notices comes from recent collation of those reports across Khalīfa b. Khayyāṭ and al-Ṭabarī; the inference drawn from the divergence is this study's, not the source's. The substitution of al-Maʾmūn's name for ʿAbd al-Malik's in the Dome of the Rock's dedication, with the date of 72 left standing, is visible in the mosaic and is not disputed. The failure of the Abbasid *miḥna* a century later is noted here only to mark that the crowding established under the Umayyads proved permanent; that episode lies outside this study's period and is not reconstructed.

MODULE 8

THE PRICE AGREED AT JĀBIYA

Module 8 · elite coordination and the default — the chain audited link by link, from the caliph down to the village headman; what the arrangement paid each man to defend it; and the three places where a group with standing and means stopped being paid

The transaction

In the summer of 684 the Umayyad cause had almost nothing left. The last of Abū Sufyān's line had died childless after a few weeks on the throne. Damascus, Ḥimṣ, Qinnasrīn, Palestine and the Jazīra had gone over to Ibn al-Zubayr in Mecca. The family's surviving men had been expelled from Medina and were refugees in Syria, and Marwān b. al-Ḥakam was reportedly prepared to submit.

What happened instead happened at al-Jābiya, the old Ghassānid encampment on the Jawlān, and it happened in the form of a bargain. Ḥassān b. Mālik b. Baḥdal, chief of the Kalb, assembled the representatives of the Yamanī tribes of Syria in council. They elected Marwān caliph. And they did it — the sources are unembarrassed about this — **in exchange for economic privileges to the loyalist tribes.**

Six weeks later, on 18 August, that coalition met the Qaysī army of al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Qays at Marj Rāhiṭ north of Damascus and destroyed it. Al-Ḍaḥḥāk was killed. The Umayyads had Syria back.

Begin here, because it is the founding transaction of the arrangement this module has to audit, and because everything the framework wants to know about a co-optation is legible in it. What was bought: recognition, and an army. What was paid: privileges, meaning shares of the province's revenue and access to command and office. And what the grantees owed in return — the single most diagnostic fact about any such bargain — was **armed service**. The Kalb and the Quḍāʿa did not undertake to obey and pay taxes. They undertook to fight, and they fought within the month, and they went on being the thing that made Umayyad rule possible for the next sixty-six years.

The framework's prediction for a co-optation whose consideration is armed service is unambiguous: the same clause that solves the coordination problem installs a permanent civil-war risk, because the ruler's army is the sum of his allies' retinues and can at any moment become the army that removes him. In the medieval European case the study is then supposed to date the first revolt.

Here there is nothing to date. **The arrangement was founded in a battle between the two halves of the force it depended on**, and the feud that arose from that battle ran, without a decade's remission, until the dynasty's last caliph was hunted down in Egypt. The defect came due on the day the contract was signed.

The chain, link by link

The framework asks a study to run the audit explicitly and at every level: *does this man, in defending his own position, thereby defend the whole arrangement?* Not whether he approves of it, not whether he likes the men above him — whether his own interest and the arrangement's survival point the same way. Where they do, the order reproduces itself with nobody coordinating anything. Where they come apart in a group that has standing and means, that is the fault line.

The caliph. Trivially yes, and not worth a sentence except to note that he is one man and the audit only becomes interesting below him.

The Umayyad family. Strongly aligned, and the mechanism is the settlement rather than sentiment. They held the great provincial governorships — ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz b. Marwān ran Egypt for twenty years, Maslama commanded on the Byzantine front — and, more durably, they held heritable estates carved out of the Sasanian crown lands at the preferential tithe rate, and the desert estates of the Syrian steppe with their dams, reservoirs and olive presses. A man with that portfolio defends the arrangement without being asked.

But note the qualification, because it matters later. What such a man defends is *the family's* hold, not any particular caliph's, and those are not the same object. The family grew very large.

The Syrian tribal chiefs. Aligned — conditionally, and the condition is factional. A Kalbī chief in 690 defends the arrangement because the arrangement is paying him in offices, commands and revenue shares. A Qaysī chief in 690 does not, because it is not.

Reverse the court's tilt and the polarity of the link reverses with it: by 743, with al-Walīd II leaning on the Qays, it was the Yaman who had stopped being paid, and it was the Yaman who killed him.

This is the structural peculiarity of the whole arrangement and it should be stated plainly. **Because the co-opted class was factional, the arrangement had at all times a disaffected half — and which half it was could be changed by a single appointment.** That is not a defect that can be repaired by better management. It is what happens when the coalition that installs a dynasty is one of two blocs rather than the whole.

The Syrian rank and file. Aligned, on the payroll, and the alignment was deliberately engineered. From ʿAbd al-Malik's reforms the payments in the register stopped looking like inherited pensions and began to look like salaries for current service. And the Syrians were quartered across five military districts among an overwhelmingly Christian population rather than concentrated in tribal quarters of a garrison city — which meant that a Syrian soldier's relations ran through his commander and his pay rather than through his quarter and his cousins. That is why the Syrian army stayed loyal where the Iraqi armies did not: not Syrian piety, but a different filing system.

Weakened, over time, by two things: continuous campaigning on four fronts at once, and the closure of the frontier, which is the subject of a later section.

The provincial governors. Aligned, emphatically, and the mechanism is appointment. They were named by the caliph, removable at will, enriched enormously while in post, and possessed of nothing the caliph could not take back. Al-Ḥajjāj held Iraq and the east from 694 to 714 and Qurra b. Sharīk held Egypt from 709 to 715; both were made by the appointment and had no independent base to fall back on. Rotation was the norm and long tenure the exception — but note that the exceptions became powers in their own right, and al-Ḥajjāj's twenty years made him the most consequential official the dynasty ever produced.

And now the breaks.

The Iraqi tribal nobility. *Aligned until 701. Not thereafter.* This is the first cut link and it is the sharpest in the chain.

The *ashrāf* of Kūfa and Baṣra were the conquest elite of the richest province in the world. They had commanded at Qādisiyya, held the province through the first civil

war, and drawn the top of the stipend register. Ibn al-Ashʿath, who led them out in 700, was the grandson of one of the great chiefs of Kinda. What the settlement did to them after Dayr al-Jamājim was to strike their armies off the military payroll altogether and build a garrison city, Wāsiṭ, midway between their two cities, manned by Syrians, to watch them.

Ask the audit question of a Kufan noble in 705. His position — standing, following, income, command — has been taken away by the arrangement, and the arrangement has installed foreign troops in the middle of his province at his province's expense to make sure he does not get it back. He defends his own interest by opposing. The modern summary is exact: the suppression of Ibn al-Ashʿath's revolt ended the power of the tribal nobility of Iraq, which thereafter came under the direct control of Syrian troops.

That is a whole stratum with standing and means, removed from the arrangement by policy, and left in place.

The Khurasani Arabs. *Increasingly not, and this is where it finally broke.* They were the settlers of the eastern frontier — Arab tribesmen who had gone out with the conquests, taken land, intermarried, learned Persian, and become in every practical sense a provincial society rather than a garrison. They carried the fighting in the east. And they were the one great concentration of the conquest caste that the Syrians never got round to garrisoning: there was no Wāsiṭ in Khurasan.

By the 730s the audit question returns an increasingly hostile answer for a Khurasani. He does the fighting; the plunder has stopped; the court's favour tilts by faction and his faction is generally out; and the Syrian troops who are the arrangement's real beneficiaries are a thousand miles behind him. He has standing, he has means, and he is armed.

The *mawālī*. Never in the chain at all. The settlement's register did not seat them; the only door into the conquering society made a man a named individual's hereditary client; and in most provinces and most decades they went on paying at the rate of the conquered. There is no position the arrangement gave them that they defend by defending it.

The conquered's own administrators. *Aligned for two generations, then progressively not, and the sequence is dateable.* The *dihqāns* of Iraq and Iran and the pagarchs and headmen of Egypt were the strongest quiet link the arrangement had in

its first phase: they kept their offices, kept collecting the tax, kept their cut, and had every reason to defend a conquest that had left them exactly where they were and removed the state above them that had been squeezing them. Across the eighth century they were progressively displaced by Arab officials — most thoroughly in the districts where Arab tribes had settled — and the Coptic tax revolts follow the displacement rather than the rate.

The clergy of the conquered communities. *Aligned, permanently, and this is the strongest link in the entire chain.* Coptic and Syrian Orthodox bishops, the catholicos of the Church of the East, the Zoroastrian priesthood, the Jewish community heads. Each of them held a position the Arab settlement guaranteed and the previous order had been actively threatening — a Miaphysite patriarch had spent thirteen years hiding in the marshes from a Chalcedonian state, and came out on a letter from an Arab commander. Every one of these men defended the arrangement by defending his own position, without instruction, for as long as it lasted; and the arrangement they defended outlived the dynasty by a thousand years.

The interpreter class. *Not in the chain.* The scholars of the circles held no position the arrangement had granted, drew no salary they would lose, and possessed no standing the state could withdraw. There was nothing they defended by defending themselves, and a good deal they could gain by not.

What the audit says

Lay the answers side by side and the pattern is unmistakable, and it is not the one an account of Arab supremacy would produce.

The arrangement's most reliable defenders were the *conquered's own clergy* — men of a different religion, a different language and no share whatever in the conquest caste's privileges. Its least reliable were the Arab tribal aristocracies of Iraq and Khurasan — men of the ruling ethnicity, the ruling religion, and the top of the stipend register.

The difference is not loyalty and not doctrine. It is a question about where each man's position had come from.

The bishop's office was made by the settlement out of something the previous order had been taking away from him. Before the conquest he was a hunted man;

after it he was the recognised head of his community with his own courts and his own law, guaranteed by a power that had no interest in his theology. He could not imagine that position surviving the arrangement, because it had not existed before the arrangement.

The Kufan noble's position was brought by him to the table. He had standing before the settlement recognised it; the settlement had confirmed what he already had rather than created it; and when the settlement withdrew the confirmation he was back where he started, which was still a man with a name, a following and a tribe.

Which yields this module's first finding, and it is a genuine refinement of what the default is:

> **A man defends the arrangement in proportion to how much of his position the arrangement invented.** Where an order merely recognises what a man already possesses, it has bought nothing durable, because he can picture himself without it. Where it creates what he has — out of nothing, or out of something the previous order was in the act of destroying — it has bought him permanently, and cheaply, and without needing his agreement about anything.

The Umayyads bought the clergy of three religions for the price of a letter and kept them for a millennium. They never bought the Arab nobility at all, because the Arab nobility had arrived with its own furniture.

The classification

Against the Menu, this is a blend of three families, and the blend has to be named because each one contributes a different part of the failure.

Co-opt, with armed service as the consideration. The Jābiya bargain, described above. This is the dominant family and it produces the medieval failure mode exactly as the card predicts: the coordination problem solved, and the civil-war risk installed in the same clause.

Divide-and-balance, running underneath it — and partly by design. The Qays–Yaman division organised Umayyad politics for sixty-six years. Whether it was inherited or constructed is a live scholarly question and should be presented as one. The genealogical vocabulary — northern Arabs descended from ʿAdnān, southern from Qaḥṭān — certainly pre-existed. But the sources are clear that the *feud* did not take

shape until after Muʿāwiya's reign and that it dated from Marj Rāhiṭ, and M. A. Shaban went further and argued that the two blocs were essentially political parties of the Marwānid period: the Qays for continued military expansion and the segregation of Arabs from non-Arabs, the Yaman against expansion and for the assimilation of converts. Patricia Crone criticised that reading, and the question is not settled.

What is not disputed is that the caliphs *managed* it as a system. They balanced appointments between the blocs deliberately; ʿAbd al-Malik spent his reign trying to reconcile the Qays and by 693 had brought them back into the state; and Hishām reached outside both by giving Iraq to Khālid al-Qasrī of the ostensibly neutral Bajīla. That is divide-and-balance conducted as policy, with a division the state had not designed but had certainly created, at Marj Rāhiṭ, by giving one bloc the spoils of a victory over the other.

This is close enough to the *engineered fracture* the card holds pending a second case that it should be reported as a partial instance, with the qualification stated: **the fracture was not engineered at the founding; it was a by-product that later rulers then managed as though it were an instrument.** Which is arguably worse, because a designed division can in principle be undesigned, and this one could not — the caliphs could shift which half was disaffected but never make neither half so.

And Export, until 740. For a century the conquests were an outlet of extraordinary capacity. A surplus claimant with a following and no seat could go east or west, and the frontier absorbed him, paid him in plunder and land, and returned him with standing. That is the Export family running at full pressure, and it is why the order carried a dangerous overproduction rate for four generations without fracturing terminally.

Khalid Blankinship's reconstruction supplies the closing date, and it is the most useful single number in this module: **from 122/740 the campaigns stopped on all frontiers, with only a couple of exceptions.** The Great Berber Revolt of 740–43 ended the expansion in the west; the eastern and Byzantine fronts had already ceased to pay.

The succession, and two other states that faced the same question

The framework's chair question has to be asked directly: what mechanism made and unmade this order's elite, and why that one?

The answer is heredity, and the reason is not that the Umayyads believed in it. It is that **no consultative mechanism could ever have chosen them.** The obvious alternative — a *shūrā*, a council of the leading Muslims — would have been composed of precisely the men who had spent thirty years arguing that this family were usurpers: the Medinan companions' families, the ʿAlids, the Zubayrids. Muʿāwiya designating his son in 676 or thereabouts was not a preference for dynasty over consultation. It was the only mechanism whose outcome he could control, and he adopted it knowing what it would cost, which is what makes it the clearest case in the corpus of a ruler taking an option because the alternatives are not available to *him* rather than because they do not exist.

But the Marwānids did not run simple primogeniture, and the device they did run deserves naming because it is a real institutional answer. Under the *wilāyat al-ʿahd*, the reigning caliph nominated his successors — usually **two, in a stipulated order** — and the community or its representatives swore the *bayʿa* to both while the incumbent was still living. The nominees became the *walī al-ʿahd*s, and the oath changed their status in advance.

That solves two things properly. It abolishes the interregnum, which is where most dynastic orders lose control. And it names the second man, so that a death in campaign or plague does not open the question.

It fails in a way that is equally structural. Publishing the succession creates, in every reign, a designated heir and a designated spare, each with a following, each waiting, each able to be courted. It makes every reign the incubation of the next dispute. And it does not prevent an incumbent from trying to displace a man already sworn to in favour of his own son — which is what Hishām attempted against al-Walīd II, and which is the immediate origin of the collapse of 744.

Set the three answers side by side, because three states meeting the identical problem and answering it three ways is the most useful thing comparative work produces.

The **Ottomans** legalised fratricide: the acceding sultan kills his brothers, which removes every rival in a night and costs the dynasty a generation's ability each time.

The **Qing** used secret designation: the emperor wrote his heir's name and sealed it in a box behind a tablet in the hall, to be opened at his death, so that no candidate could build a faction because no candidate knew he was the candidate.

The **Umayyads** published two names in advance and took oaths to both.

Kill the rivals; hide the name; announce the name. The first costs blood and talent. The second requires a ruler with total control of his own household and a bureaucracy that will honour a piece of paper. The third guarantees a faction fight in every reign and is the only one of the three available to a dynasty that has to make its succession *visible* in order to make it stick — which the Umayyads did, because their whole difficulty was that nobody accepted their title in the first place.

The arithmetic of 744

Then the pressure and the outlet come apart, and it can be counted.

From ʿAbd al-Malik the caliphate passed to his son al-Walīd I, then to his brother Sulaymān, then to their cousin ʿUmar II, then to their brother Yazīd II, then to their brother Hishām — five reigns before it returned to the next generation. ʿAbd al-Malik is credited with something like nineteen sons. By the 740s the sons and grandsons of four caliphs were alive and had claims.

In 744 there were four caliphs in a single year. Al-Walīd II was killed in April by a Yamanī conspiracy that resented his dependence on the Qays. Yazīd III took his place and was dead by October. Ibrāhīm succeeded and was deposed within weeks. Marwān II came in from the Jazīra in December, with the Qays behind him, and moved the capital to Ḥarrān.

Now put the two clocks together, because they are the module's conclusion.

The outlet closes in **740**. The dynasty's own overproduction, which the outlet had been absorbing for a century, detonates in **744**. The clandestine movement in the one great garrison nobody had garrisoned rises in **747**. The Zāb is **750**.

Ten years from the frontier stopping to the family being hunted through Egypt. The framework's own comparison is the English case, where the Wars of the Roses arrived within two years of the Hundred Years War's outlet closing; here the interval is

four years to the first civil war and ten to the end. **An order carrying a dangerous overproduction rate on the strength of an outlet does not decline gently when the outlet shuts. It has about a decade.**

Reading the default against the framework

Three things, and the first is the contribution.

On what the default actually buys. The finding stated above — that a man defends the arrangement in proportion to how much of his position the arrangement *invented* — resolves a puzzle this case otherwise presents as a paradox: that the most reliable defenders of an Arab Muslim conquest state were Christian and Zoroastrian clergy, and its least reliable were Arab Muslim nobles. It also sharpens the card's existing point about re-sourcing title. The card holds that a grant binds because it changes where a man's claim comes from — same ground, different source, and the source is the tie. This case adds the measure: **the tie is only as strong as the distance between what the man has now and what he would have without the arrangement.** Confirm an existing chief in what he already holds and you have bought a year's goodwill. Create a bishop's jurisdiction where the previous state was hunting him, and you have bought his successors for a thousand years.

On how a conquest caste should be registered. The Umayyad *dīwān* enrolled men by tribe, paid them by tribe, quartered them by tribal quarter in the garrison cities and mustered them by tribe. For a hundred years the state's own payroll was the instrument that kept descent-group identity administratively real and fiscally salient — the thing a man's income, his neighbours, his commander and his muster all ran through.

Set that against the Manchu banner reorganisation, which deliberately cut *across* clan membership, so that a banner was a unit of the state and not a lineage, and a man's company was not his cousins. Same problem — how do you register a conquest caste — and opposite instruments, with opposite results: the Manchus did not fracture on clan lines in two hundred and sixty-eight years, and the Arabs fractured on nothing else in ninety.

Two instances is where a finding starts to be worth something, and this one is worth stating: **a conquest caste registered by descent group will fracture along descent**

groups; a caste registered across them will not. The register is not a neutral accounting instrument. It decides which identities remain load-bearing, because it decides which ones a man's livelihood runs through — and the identities a state pays through are the identities its factions will eventually form along.

Note the Abbasid confirmation, arriving immediately: under the successor dynasty the Qays–Yaman rivalry diminished sharply, and the reason given is that, unlike the Umayyads, the Abbasids did not draw the bulk of their military support from either faction. They changed the recruitment base, and the division that had organised sixty-six years of politics became an antiquarian matter within a generation. It had never been about ancestry. It had been about who was on the roll.

And on the fault line, which is where this study now has to go. The audit locates it precisely, and it is not at the bottom. The men who broke this arrangement were not peasants, converts or slaves. They were men with standing and means whom the arrangement had stopped paying: the Iraqi nobility struck off the register in 701, and the Khurasani Arabs left carrying a frontier that had stopped producing. Both were armed, both had commanded, both had once been at the top of the settlement, and both were still in place when the arrangement withdrew their reason to defend it.

The framework's rule is that structural change comes from inside the hierarchy, never from the ruled. This case will test that rule harder than any other in the collection, because the movement that came out of Khurasan in 747 succeeded where every rising in this corpus has failed — and the question the next module has to answer is whether it succeeded because it was something new, or because it was, precisely, a coalition of disappointed insiders doing exactly what the framework says disappointed insiders do.

A note on sources.

No document survives from any of the events in this module. Everything reconstructed here — the Jābiya conclave and its terms, the course of Marj Rāhiṭ, the *ayyām* of Qays and Yaman, the designation practice, the sequence of 744 — comes through the narrative Arabic tradition compiled a century and more later under the dynasty that destroyed the Umayyads, and the caution stated at the outset of this study applies throughout with full force. Where a report runs against the interest of the tradition

preserving it, that is noted; the frankness of the sources about the Jābiya bargain being a purchase is of that character, since a hostile tradition had no need to record that the Syrian tribes were bought when it could simply have said they were fanatics.

The date of Marj Rāhiṭ, 18 August 684, is stable; the numbers reported for the two armies are not and are given elsewhere in this study as ranges. The claim that the Qays–Yaman feud "did not effectively take shape" before Muʿāwiya's death, and dated from Marj Rāhiṭ, is the standard modern reading. M. A. Shaban's argument that Qays and Yaman functioned as political parties of the Marwānid period, divided over expansion and over the assimilation of non-Arab converts, is his interpretation and is contested — Patricia Crone criticised it directly — and it is presented here as a live dispute rather than adopted. Hishām's appointment of Khālid al-Qasrī of Bajīla to Iraq as a move outside both factions, and the Abbasid diminution of the rivalry through a change of recruitment base, are both standard.

The mechanics of the *wilāyat al-ʿahd* — nomination of successors by the incumbent, usually two in a stipulated order, with the *bayʿa* sworn to them during the incumbent's lifetime — follow Andrew Marsham's *Rituals of Islamic Monarchy*. The dating of the closure of the frontiers to 122/740, and the reading of the Great Berber Revolt of 740–43 as the end of expansion in the west, are Khalid Blankinship's central findings in *The End of the Jihâd State*; his thesis that the military reverses of Hishām's reign were avoidable disasters presaging the collapse is his argument and is credited as such, and it revised a prior consensus that had treated Hishām as a competent caliph. The number of ʿAbd al-Malik's sons is as reported in the genealogical literature and should be treated as approximate. Petra Sijpesteijn's work supplies the displacement of the Christian administrative class across the eighth century, and Hugh Kennedy's the shift of the Marwānid military payments from pension to salary. The Manchu banner comparison rests on the companion study in this collection.

MODULE 9

THE SEALED LETTER

Module 9 · plurality or foreclosure — what counterweights existed that the apex did not own; what a subject with a grievance could actually do; where the real protections came from and who bargained for them; and why one of this dynasty's two great settlements outlived it by a millennium while the other destroyed it

What a man with a grievance could actually do

Begin at the bottom with a concrete case, because liberty is either something a particular person can do on a particular day or it is a word.

A Coptic cultivator in Middle Egypt in the year 710 has been squeezed by the pagarch of his district — an assessment he thinks wrong, a seizure he thinks arbitrary, a requisition he thinks he does not owe. What is available to him?

The papyri answer, and the answer is more than nothing. The governor Qurra b. Sharīk, writing to Basileios, pagarch of Ishqūh, claims effective judicial authority over the province and exercises it: Christian litigants approach him, by a procedure that probably continues Byzantine practice, and he sends rescripts back down ordering the pagarch to hear their complaints. He specifies the evidentiary standard — the claimant must produce *bayyina*, proof. He urges Basileios to be more just and to listen carefully to the complaints of his people. And the sanctions ran in that direction: a pagarch who was slow in remitting taxes was fined, but corruption and the mistreatment of taxpayers were punished by the central authorities more severely still.

That is a working channel of redress, documented, in operation, used by the conquered against the conquerors' own officials. It should be credited and it is not trivial.

But describe it exactly. **It is the apex hearing complaints against his own subordinates.** It is protection *by* the state from the state's agents; it is not protection *from* the state. It exists because a ruler whose officials rob the taxpayers loses revenue and eventually loses the province, and it therefore reaches precisely as far as that interest

reaches and no further. There is no version of it in which the complaint is against the governor's own instruction, or the caliph's rate, or the requisition of a sawyer for a mosque in Damascus.

A day of the week

The institutional form of that channel is worth naming, because it is the nearest thing this order had to a constitutional protection.

ʿAbd al-Malik is credited with being the first ruler to set aside **a day of the week** for receiving complaints in matters the ordinary courts found difficult to handle — with a scholar, Abū Idrīs, conducting the cases while the caliph gave the orders. That practice became the *maẓālim*, the jurisdiction of grievances, which in the developed Abbasid form had its own sessions, its guards, its judges, its jurists, its secretaries to keep the record and its notaries to witness, and a jurisdiction extending to the abuse of power by officials and non-officials alike.

Al-Māwardī, writing three centuries later, held that the institution had existed in the pre-Islamic Arab community and under the Sasanians — which is the ordinary finding of this study restated. They captured it; they did not invent it.

Now test it as a counterweight. A counterweight is genuine to the degree that it can check the apex. The *maẓālim* sits at the apex, is convened by him at his pleasure, hears what he agrees to hear, and exists in order to make his administration function. It is an excellent instrument of government. It is not a limit on government, and it was never designed to be.

The courts

Nor were the courts. Under the Umayyads the office of *qāḍī* began as something close to a legal secretary to the provincial governor. The documentary evidence from Egypt shows the governor to have been the highest judicial authority, with powers far exceeding any judge's; in the major cities governors appointed and dismissed *qāḍīs* at will and could overrule their decisions swiftly; and al-Kindī preserves the pay — twenty dinars for two months for a *qāḍī* in office in the 740s.

A judge on the governor's payroll, appointed by the governor, removable at the governor's word and reversible by the governor's order, is an organ of the state wearing

a different hat. Whatever protections he delivered — and he delivered real ones between private parties — he delivered at the state's pleasure.

The one thing they did not own

There was exactly one counterweight in this order that the apex could not appoint, could not license, could not fund into obedience and could not dissolve, and this study has already met it: the men of the circles.

Their standing came from their own transmission and their own reputation. It was portable, it survived a change of ruler, and it could not be conferred. When ʿUmar II wanted the traditions collected he had to *ask* al-Zuhrī and Ibn Ḥazm; when ʿAbd al-Malik wanted a Qurʾānic commentary he had to *ask* Saʿīd b. Jubayr. Those are approaches, not orders, and the state's inability to phrase them as orders is the measure of the thing.

But be exact about what kind of counterweight this was, because inflating it would falsify the module.

It had no institutional form. No assembly, no synod, no vote, no veto, no charter, no building, no membership. It could not compel the state to do anything or prevent it from doing anything. And it conferred no protection whatever on its own members: Ḥujr b. ʿAdī was killed at Marj ʿAdhrāʾ, Saʿīd b. Jubayr beheaded at Wāsiṭ, Ghaylān al-Dimashqī executed under Hishām, and al-Ḥasan al-Baṣrī spent a decade in hiding from al-Ḥajjāj. Not one act of the Umayyad state was stopped by a scholar's objection.

What the class could do was two things, and both turned out to matter more than anything the *maẓālim* ever did.

It could **withhold** — decline the judgeship, refuse the salary, stay away from the court — and the withholding was visible, which made it a standing public statement about the ruler that the ruler could not answer.

And it could **remember** — accumulate, transmit and eventually write down a record and a standard against which the dynasty's conduct could be measured, at leisure, afterwards, by people it could not reach.

Call it what it was: a counterweight with no contemporaneous power and enormous retrospective power. **The seam was crowded but not armed.**

Speech, and assembly

Speech was free for the patronised and lethal for the unpatronised, which is not a liberty but a market.

The poetry of this period is public, political and savage. The *naqāʾiḍ* — the flytings between Jarīr and al-Farazdaq, with al-Akhṭal taking sides — were performed before audiences, carried real factional content, and attacked named living men. That is a genuinely open public discourse of a kind many orders do not permit. All three of the poets involved were on somebody's payroll.

Set beside that the fate of a man who spoke without a patron. Ḥujr b. ʿAdī, a Companion of the Prophet, objected from the floor of the mosque at Kūfa to a liturgical act the state performed weekly from the pulpit, and was taken to Syria and killed for it, on a charge of defying the community's consensus. The distance between al-Farazdaq and Ḥujr b. ʿAdī is not a distance between two kinds of speech. It is a distance between two kinds of speaker.

Assembly was, by contrast, genuinely and consequentially free — and it was free by omission rather than by grant. The congregational mosque held the governor's pulpit at one end and, on the floor, any number of teaching circles that nobody had licensed and nobody dissolved. Men gathered, disputed, formed schools and factions, and were left alone as long as they did not touch the succession. That is a real freedom of assembly, it had enormous consequences, and no one ever granted it. It survived because no state had yet conceived of it as something that could be taken.

Where the residue came from

Which brings the module to its actual question. Protections are not produced by the people who need them most. They are produced by factions inside the hierarchy, bargaining from strength at moments when the apex needs something — and what they leave behind is residue, which accretes.

This case supplies three instances, and between them they run the whole range from worthless to permanent.

Instance one: a receipt, 661

Al-Ḥasan b. ʿAlī ceded the caliphate to Muʿāwiya in the summer of 661 on written conditions: that Muʿāwiya should rule in accordance with the Qurʾān and the *sunna*, that his successor should be chosen by a council rather than named, that the people should be safe, and that al-Ḥasan's own supporters should have amnesty. Muʿāwiya, offered a blank sheet, invited al-Ḥasan to write whatever he wanted. The terms were carried to him by witnesses and accepted.

At the surrender ceremony in Kūfa he publicly repudiated them, saying — in the reports — that the promises had been made in order to shorten the war.

Run the liberty test on that document at the moment of grant, and it fails before the ink is dry. Who would have been hurt by a breach, and had they any standing? Al-Ḥasan's supporters — who had, by the very operation of the agreement, just given up their army. **The guarantee's only enforcement mechanism was the thing the guarantee had been exchanged for.**

State it as the negative pole of the test, because no case in this collection states it more cleanly: **a liberty whose sole beneficiaries are the party that disarmed to obtain it is not a liberty. It is a receipt.** Muʿāwiya knew it, al-Ḥasan probably knew it, and the men who prosecuted the Umayyads for eleven centuries afterwards knew it too — which is the only thing the document ever actually did.

Instance two: a settlement that outlived everybody, 636–642

At the conquest, the communities of the conquered were offered terms: keep your churches, your clergy, your courts and your own law; pay the tax; do not serve in the army. It was not a document — the Pact of ʿUmar, the text usually produced as the charter of this arrangement, is of seriously contested attribution and is probably a good deal later than the conquest, and it should not be used as evidence for the seventh century. What is evidence is the arrangement in operation: ʿAmr's letter recalling the patriarch Benjamin, the Coptic bishops administering their communities, the Nestorian catholicos in place, the Jewish academies of Iraq undisturbed, the fire temples still functioning.

That settlement outlived the dynasty by a thousand years. It was still, in modified form, the constitutional basis of non-Muslim life in the Ottoman Empire when the Ḥatt-i Hümayun began dismantling it in 1856.

Run the test. Who would have been hurt by a breach?

The communities themselves — millions of people, and for this purpose they do not count, because they had neither standing nor means and their being hurt has never by itself protected anything.

Their clergy — bishops, catholicoi, *mowbeds*, community heads — every one of whom held an office and a jurisdiction that this settlement had created and the previous order had been dismantling, and every one of whom was the state's own channel to a population it could not otherwise reach.

And the treasury — which drew an enormous share of its revenue from precisely the fact that these people remained what they were.

Two constituencies with something countable to lose, and one of them was the fisc. That is why it held. Not because anybody honoured it: because breaching it was expensive to people who could make the expense felt, and the expense was itemised.

Instance three: the sealed letter, 717

And here is the case's clearest demonstration of how a protection is actually made, and it is a palace manoeuvre.

In September 717 the caliph Sulaymān was dying at Dābiq. He had sons and he had brothers. His chief adviser was Rajāʾ b. Ḥaywa al-Kindī — a Yamanī religious scholar of client family, a respected transmitter of tradition, who had advised ʿAbd al-Malik, al-Walīd I and Sulaymān in turn, and who had had a hand in the building of the Dome of the Rock. Rajāʾ persuaded the dying caliph to pass over both his sons and his brothers in favour of his cousin ʿUmar b. ʿAbd al-ʿAzīz.

Then he executed it, and the device is the module's title. He assembled the Umayyad family and took their oaths of allegiance **to a successor whose name was sealed inside a letter they had not been allowed to read.** Only when the oaths were sworn did he open it and reveal ʿUmar, with Yazīd II named next in line. When Sulaymān's brothers protested at being passed over, he threatened them with force.

(The account descends through Rajāʾ's own telling by way of al-Wāqidī, which is a reason for caution; Reinhard Eisener has argued that his role is likely exaggerated for exactly that reason, and the caveat should stand.)

Now count what came out of that manoeuvre in twenty-nine months of reign.

The ritual cursing of ʿAlī from the pulpits of the empire was abolished, after something close to sixty years.

The fiscal rescript established that a man who accepts Islam enjoys all the privileges of the Muslims and is subject to all their duties, and that it is their duty to associate with him and treat him as one of themselves — the land held to its category, but the person released.

The traditions of the Prophet were ordered collected, written down and distributed across the empire, with teachers appointed, weekly sessions instituted in the Ḥijāz and scholars sent into Egypt and North Africa.

The ruinous siege of Constantinople was lifted.

Officials were barred from private business.

And the consultative body of pious men that ʿUmar had run as governor of Medina came with him to Damascus.

Every one of those measures benefits people well outside the faction that produced them: converts, ʿAlids, scholars, soldiers, taxpayers. And the faction that produced them was not a movement and not a rising. It was one Yamanī scholar with the ear of a dying caliph, exploiting a succession vacancy against the caliph's own sons, at the one moment in a reign when a caliph cannot enforce anything.

That is where the protections come from. Not from the people who need them; not from below at all. From a quarrel inside the hierarchy, settled by somebody with standing at a moment when the apex needs something he cannot compel, with the benefit falling on whoever happens to be standing in the right place when the bargain is struck.

Which residue stuck

The test of a concession is what survives the man who made it, and ʿUmar II's measures sort themselves in a way that is instructive.

The cursing was never restored. That is the most surprising survival, because it had no organised constituency to protect it and the faction that had benefited most from ending it — the ʿAlids — remained the dynasty's enemies. Ask why it stuck and the answer is about the *direction of effort*. Leaving it abolished cost a successor nothing and required no act. Restoring it would have required him to stand up in public and reinstate, by positive decision, a practice his predecessor had ended as impious, in front

of everyone who had approved. **The cheapest liberty to keep is the one whose withdrawal requires a fresh and conspicuous act.**

The fiscal equality was partly reversed by his successors under fiscal pressure, then re-established in modified form, and finally canonised by the jurists and inherited by the Abbasids. Partial residue, arrived at over half a century, and the version that survived was the one that saved the revenue.

The consultative body vanished with him, because it existed only in his person and had no institutional form at all.

And the collection of the traditions was never reversed, because it could not be. By the time anybody might have wished to undo it, the material had been written down and copied and sent out, and books do not come back. That measure is the most durable residue of the three by an enormous margin, and — as this study has already argued — it is what the case against the dynasty was eventually built out of.

So the durability sorts exactly as the test predicts, with one addition: **a measure survives to the extent that its reversal would cost somebody with standing, or would require an act the successor cannot cheaply perform, or has been placed beyond the reach of any act at all.**

The two settlements

Which brings the module to the comparison it has been building toward, and it is the cleanest instance of the liberty test that this collection possesses, because both halves of it were made by one dynasty inside one century.

The settlement binding Muslims to non-Muslims held. Protection, autonomy, jurisdiction and clergy in exchange for a tax. It outlived the dynasty that made it by a millennium.

The settlement binding Arabs above other Muslims broke them. The register that seated men by precedence in the founding wars; the stipend that went with it; the door that admitted a convert only as a named individual's hereditary client; the tax he went on paying.

Same dynasty. Same century. Same apparatus. Opposite fates.

And the difference is not justice, and not doctrine, and not the size of the injured population — the *dhimmī* population was vastly larger than the *mawālī* population

throughout the Umayyad period. The difference is entirely **who would have been hurt by a breach, and whether they could make it felt.**

Break the arrangement with the Christians and you have to answer to their bishops, who administer them for you, and to your own treasury, which is funded by them. Break the arrangement with the converts and you answer to nobody, because the convert has by definition left the community that had a clergy and has entered one that will not seat him. He has no bishop. He is not on the roll. There is no council he sits in and no officer whose position depends on him.

What he does have — and this is why the second settlement was fatal rather than merely unjust — is **every argument in the ruling doctrine**, in the ruler's own language, requiring no organisation to state and no leader to formulate.

Plural where, foreclosed where

The framework insists the question be answered by domain and by stratum rather than for the order as a whole, and this order divides very sharply.

Plural, comprehensively and permanently, in the interpretive domain. Khārijites, ʿAlids, Qadarīs, Murjiʾīs, the traditionists of Medina, the circles of Baṣra and Kūfa — and outside Islam entirely the Chalcedonians, the Miaphysites, the Church of the East, the Zoroastrian priesthood and the rabbinic academies, all contending, none licensed, none removable, none able to silence the others. That is the crowded seam at its most crowded anywhere in this collection, and it was consequential: it is why no subsequent authority in that civilisation ever captured the interpretation of the law.

Plural, in personal law, by community. A Copt was governed by Coptic law in a Coptic court under a Coptic bishop; a Jew by Jewish law; a Zoroastrian by his own. That is genuine jurisdictional pluralism of a kind most premodern orders did not permit, and it was constitutionally guaranteed rather than merely tolerated.

Foreclosed, completely, in everything touching who rules. No assembly. No council with power. No procedure for removing a caliph or contesting a succession. No institution the state had not appointed. No right of any subject to compel a hearing about anything the caliph had decided. One session of grievances a week, convened at his pleasure, hearing what he chose. The word *shūrā* — consultation — existed in the

vocabulary and was invoked by every party that opposed the dynasty for ninety years, and there was no body anywhere in the empire that performed it.

And foreclosed by architecture rather than by repression, which the framework holds to be the more durable form because it generates careers instead of martyrs. Here it generated neither, and that is the point.

The framework's sharper test is whether an opposition career is survivable and where its members go afterwards — a chamber whose critics are absorbed into governorships having foreclosed more completely than one whose critics are jailed. Run it on this case and the answer is stark, and it explains everything that happens next.

There was no opposition career. None. A man who thought the caliph wrong had exactly two paths available: silence, or armed revolt. There was no third — no seat to occupy, no petition to lodge, no faction to join that was not a conspiracy, no office in which dissent was a qualification rather than a disqualification.

Look at where the critics actually went. Ḥujr b. ʿAdī objected in a mosque and went to Marj ʿAdhrāʾ. The Kufans who repented of failing Ḥusayn went to ʿAyn al-Warda. Saʿīd b. Jubayr went to Dayr al-Jamājim and then into a cave for twelve years. Ibn al-Ashʿath turned an army round. Ghaylān al-Dimashqī, who had actually tried the third path — writing to a caliph urging reform — was executed by the next one.

Which yields the finding this module contributes to the card, and it is the one the whole study now runs on:

> **An order that provides no survivable way to be in opposition converts every critic into a rebel, and the conversion is not the critic's choice.** Foreclosure by architecture is cheap and durable, but it has a specific cost that foreclosure by repression does not: it removes the state's ability to distinguish between a man who wants a policy changed and a man who wants the dynasty dead, because it has left them the same set of moves. A ruler who has abolished the loyal opposition has not abolished the opposition. He has abolished the *loyal*.

Reading liberty against the framework

Three things, and the second is the refinement.

On the test itself. The card holds that a liberty's durability is predictable at the moment of grant by counting the beneficiaries with standing. This case confirms it

three times in one century, at three points on the scale: the ceded caliphate of 661, whose only beneficiaries had disarmed to obtain it and which was repudiated within days; the settlement with the conquered communities, whose beneficiaries included a clergy with institutional position and a treasury with a revenue line, and which lasted a thousand years; and the Arab precedence settlement, whose injured party had no protector of any kind and which destroyed the dynasty that made it. Three grants, three counts of the standing beneficiaries, three outcomes in the predicted order. It is as clean a confirmation as the corpus is likely to get.

The refinement to add: count the beneficiaries, and then count the effort of reversal. ʿUmar II's abolition of the cursing had no standing constituency behind it and survived anyway, for sixty years and beyond the dynasty, because undoing it would have required a successor to perform a conspicuous public act of restoration that nobody wanted to be seen performing. The default runs in both directions. **A concession that lapses if unattended needs beneficiaries with standing to attend it. A concession that persists unless positively revoked needs only that revoking it be embarrassing.** Which suggests, for any case, a second question to put beside the first: *what would somebody have to actually do, in public, to take this back?*

And a third, which this case supplies almost uniquely: a liberty made of information is the hardest of all to revoke. ʿUmar II's commission to collect and distribute the traditions is the only one of his measures that no successor could have undone even if every one of them had wanted to, because what was granted was not a right, an office, an exemption or a rate, but a *corpus* — and once copied and dispatched it existed in more hands than any state could reach. The card holds that the trusted-information position can be crowded but never emptied. This case adds the mechanism by which crowding is made permanent: **write the material down and distribute it, and the crowding survives every subsequent ruler, including the ones who would have preferred it otherwise.** A ruler who does that has limited his successors more effectively than any charter, and — as this dynasty discovered — he has limited himself.

A note on sources.

The documentary evidence in this module is the Egyptian papyri: Qurra b. Sharīk's rescripts to Basileios of Ishqūh ordering him to hear complaints and specifying the

requirement of *bayyina*, his exhortations to the pagarch to listen to his people, and the record of officials fined and punished for mistreating taxpayers and for failing to return fugitives. The reading of these follows Mathieu Tillier's work on judicial administration in early Islamic Egypt and the study of policing in the countryside in *Authority and Control in the Countryside*; Tillier's associated argument that the term *qāḍī* may have been retroactively applied to the Umayyad period by early Abbasid literature is noted but not relied on. Al-Kindī's *Governors and Judges of Egypt* supplies the *qāḍī*'s pay and the pattern of appointment and dismissal by governors; Joseph Schacht's characterisation of the early *qāḍī* as a legal secretary to the governor remains the standard reading.

The attribution to ʿAbd al-Malik of the first weekly session for complaints, with Abū Idrīs conducting and the caliph ordering, is transmitted in the later juristic literature on the *maẓālim* and is repeated by al-Māwardī, who also held that the institution predated Islam in Arabia and under the Sasanians; it is a retrospective account by jurists systematising an institution they had inherited, and is presented as such. The developed procedural description — the guards, judges, jurists, secretaries and notaries — is al-Māwardī's eleventh-century one and is not evidence for Umayyad practice.

The Ḥasan–Muʿāwiya treaty and its public repudiation come through the narrative tradition and are reported with variations, including over the financial terms; Wilferd Madelung's reconstruction is the basis used here, and al-Ṭabarī's report of a payment from the Kūfa treasury is among the disputed details. The *dhimmī* arrangement is attested in operation by the papyri, by the *History of the Patriarchs*, and by the continuity of the non-Muslim hierarchies; **the Pact of ʿUmar is of seriously contested attribution and is probably substantially later than the conquest, and it is not used here as evidence for the seventh century.** The Ottoman Ḥatt-i Hümayun of 1856 is cited only to mark the arrangement's terminus and lies far outside this study.

The succession manoeuvre of 717 — Rajāʾ b. Ḥaywa's persuasion of the dying Sulaymān, the oaths taken to a sealed name, the revelation of ʿUmar with Yazīd II next, and the threat of force against Sulaymān's brothers — rests on al-Wāqidī's account, which traces back to Rajāʾ's own telling. Reinhard Eisener has argued that Rajāʾ's role is probably exaggerated for that reason, and that caution is stated in the text rather than buried here. Rajāʾ's Kindite and client background, his service to four caliphs and his

involvement in the Dome of the Rock are separately attested. ʿUmar II's measures — the abolition of the cursing, the fiscal rescript, the hadith commission, the withdrawal from Constantinople, the restriction of officials' private dealings, the consultative body he had run as governor of Medina — are reported across the tradition; the tradition in question exempted ʿUmar II from its general condemnation of the dynasty and therefore had a motive to credit him generously, and the list should be read with that in mind. The partial reversal of his fiscal measures by his successors is likewise standard, and the date at which the system finally settled is disputed, as recorded elsewhere in this study.

MODULE 10

THE NAME THEY WERE FORBIDDEN TO SPEAK

Module 10 · change and collapse — which crack opened the floor and when; who cut the opening and who walked through it; why a slogan that named nobody was the most efficient instrument in the field; and what the morning after disclosed about who had been meant all along

The floor was broken before anybody rose

The received account of the Abbasid revolution is that a movement came out of Khurasan and overthrew the Umayyad Caliphate. The sequence does not support it, and the sequence is the whole of this module's argument.

740. The campaigns stop. On Khalid Blankinship's reconstruction the *jihād* ceases on all frontiers from 122/740 with only a couple of exceptions, and the Great Berber Revolt of 740–43 ends expansion in the west. For a century the frontier had absorbed the surplus claimants of a conquest caste and paid them in plunder and land. It stops paying.

743. Hishām dies after nineteen years, the longest reign of the dynasty.

744. Four caliphs in a single year. In April al-Walīd II is deposed and killed — by a conspiracy of his own kinsmen, backed by the Yaman, who resented his dependence on the Qays. Yazīd III rides into Damascus on a donkey, which is a claim to be something more than a caliph, and is dead by October. Ibrāhīm succeeds and is deposed within weeks. Marwān II comes down from Armenia in December with the Qays behind him.

745–746. Marwān moves the capital out of Damascus to Ḥarrān in the Jazīra. Syria — the province the dynasty had ruled from for eighty-three years, the home ground of the only army it could rely on — rises against him. **He razes the walls of its cities and destroys Homs.**

745–746. In Iraq, al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Qays al-Shaybānī's Khārijite rising takes Kufa and holds the province. Marwān puts it down over two years, besieging its successor at Mosul for six months.

746. In Khurasan, al-Ḥārith b. Surayj revolts at Merv, joins forces with al-Kirmānī, and drives the Umayyad governor Naṣr b. Sayyār out of his own capital to Nishapur. Qays against Yaman, Arab against Arab, in the province furthest from Damascus.

747. Marwān has, at last, pacified the centre. Within months of that, in Ramaḍān, Abū Muslim raises the black banners at Merv.

Set that sequence out and the ordinary story inverts. **By the time anybody in Khurasan raised a banner, the dynasty had been fighting itself for three years; the caliph had abandoned his capital, torn down the walls of his own province's cities and burned one of them; and the governor of Khurasan had already been driven out of Merv by other Arabs.** The revolution did not crack the floor. It walked into a crack the dynasty had cut itself, in a province where the state's own representative had already lost control to men of his own caste.

The four cracks, checked

The framework names four ways a floor opens. Run them.

Fracture — comprehensively, and twice over. The dynasty split against itself in the most literal available sense in 744, when a caliph was killed by a conspiracy including his own relations. And the coalition that had put the family in power split at the same time and in the same lines it had been split since 684: Qays against Yaman, simultaneously in Syria, in Iraq and in Khurasan. Both applications of the crack are present, and they are the same crack — the one opened at Marj Rāhiṭ sixty years earlier and never closed.

Exhaustion — yes, and it can be dated, but it is not the variety the card describes. The Umayyads were not defeated in a great-power war and did not lose their army. The Syrian *ajnād* were intact in 747 and Marwān fought competently with them to the end. What had failed was not the instrument but its purpose: the frontier had stopped producing, so the arrangement stopped being able to pay the men whose payment was the arrangement.

Overproduction — yes, and inside the ruling house itself. ʿAbd al-Malik's line had produced five reigning caliphs and, by the 740s, the sons and grandsons of four of them were alive with claims. Four caliphs in one year is what that looks like when the outlet that had been absorbing the surplus for a century closes. And beneath the dynasty, the caste had a whole disinherited stratum still in place — the Iraqi nobility struck off the register in 701 and never reseated.

Conquest by a rival elite — yes, and this is the interesting one, because the rival elite was internal. What destroyed the Umayyads was not a foreign power. It was another section of the same conquest caste, drawing on the same doctrine, in the same empire, marching under a claim from the same tribe.

Who actually rose

Which requires the composition question to be handled carefully, because the received account is wrong and the wrongness matters.

The old reading — a Persian national reaction, the *mawālī* rising against Arab supremacy, an Iranian revenge for Qādisiyya — has been under sustained attack for decades and does not survive the prosopography. Look at the men.

Mālik b. al-Haytham al-Khuzāʿī: a Khurasani Arab of the Banū Khuzāʿa, one of the earliest adherents, and one of the twelve *nuqabāʾ*.

Khāzim b. Khuzayma al-Tamīmī: of the Nahshal branch of Banū Tamīm, whose family had settled at Marw al-Rūdh probably in the first days of the conquest of the region. He is recorded as preferring to address his followers in Persian, and his sister had married an Iranian.

Qaḥṭaba b. Shabīb al-Ṭāʾī, who commanded the march west that took Iraq.

These are Arabs. They are Arabs whose grandfathers came out with the conquest, who took land, learned the language, married locally and stopped being a garrison. Khāzim addressing his men in Persian is the whole sociology of the province in one detail.

The movement was broader than its officers. It drew in *mawālī*, Iranian converts, *dehqāns*, and — Patricia Crone noted this — men from regions barely conquered, whom their opponents regarded as backwoods barbarians unlike the *mawālī* the Arabs

were used to dealing with. It was a coalition, and the coalition mattered. But the men who commanded it were the settled Arab military class of Khurasan.

Which is precisely the framework's prediction. **The counter-elite was a coalition of disappointed insiders, led by men whom the order's own formation had produced and whom its settlement had stopped seating.** They were not outside the arrangement looking in. They were inside it, holding its eastern frontier, doing its fighting, on its register, and no longer being paid what the register implied.

Thirty years underground

And the organisation deserves its weight, because it is what distinguishes this rising from every failed one in the corpus.

The *da'wa* was operating in Kufa from about 98/716, through the early 720s, where — like most such movements — it got nowhere. It moved its effort to Khurasan. It then ran for roughly thirty years before it declared itself.

It had a structure. An imam at the head, whose identity was known only to the innermost circle. A deputy in Kufa through whom contact ran. Missionaries in the field — Abū ʿIkrima Ziyād al-Hamdānī, and the *mawālī* Muḥammad b. Khunays and Ḥayyān b. ʿAṭṭār — going round the villages, holding meetings, discussing messages from the imam. Finance from a wealthy client, Bukayr b. Māhān. And when membership grew past what informal contact could carry, **twelve chiefs, *nuqabā'*, were chosen from among the partisans at Merv**, on the explicit precedent of the Prophet's own twelve.

Attendance at the meetings, one of the accounts notes, was encouraged by the distribution of food, which suggests the recruitment reached well down.

Thirty years of clandestine organisation with a hierarchy, a courier system, a finance stream and a cell structure is not what a rising of the desperate looks like. It is what a counter-elite building a parallel apparatus looks like, and it requires exactly the things a peasant does not have: money, literacy, secure communication, and men with the standing to be obeyed.

The name they were forbidden to speak

And now the slogan, which is this module's title and the sharpest single instrument in the case.

The call was for **الرضا من آل محمد** — *al-riḍā min āl Muḥammad*, the acceptable one from the family of Muhammad. And the missionaries were **under strict orders not to reveal who that person was.**

Look at what that solves.

The field of anti-Umayyad opinion in the 740s was not one opposition but five, and they wanted incompatible things. The ʿAlids wanted the caliphate for the Prophet's descendants through ʿAlī and Fāṭima, and had a following that had been paying in blood since Karbalāʾ. The Abbasids wanted it for the descendants of the Prophet's uncle. The Khārijites wanted no dynasty at all and held that any qualified Muslim might lead. The Khurasani Arabs wanted their pay, their share and an end to the Syrian tilt. The *mawālī* wanted the equality the doctrine had promised them and the settlement had withheld. And the pious of Kufa and Baṣra wanted a ruler who did not drink and had not sacked Medina.

A slogan that names a *criterion* and withholds the *name* lets every one of those constituencies march under the same banner while believing it is marching for its own candidate. It cannot be contradicted, because it asserts nothing checkable. It cannot be split, because there is no name to disagree about. And it is unfalsifiable **until the moment of victory**, at which point the ambiguity has to be resolved and somebody has to be told they were not who was meant.

It is the most efficient mobilising instrument in this collection, and every part of its efficiency is borrowed against a debt that falls due on the morning after.

The charge sheet, and where every count came from

The indictment the movement carried was specific, and the framework's interest is in its provenance rather than its truth.

Usurpation — that the family had taken by force and by heredity an office that belonged to those entitled to it, and had made the community's leadership a kingship.

The killing of the Prophet's grandson at Karbalāʾ.

The sack of Medina at the lava field and the bombardment of the Kaʿba, twice.

Impiety — wine, music, the palaces, the neglect of the prayer.

And an Arab aristocracy in the place of a community of believers, with the convert kept outside the register and inside the tax.

Every one of those counts is drawn from the dynasty's own legitimating doctrine. Not one requires a foreign idea, an outside authority or a novel principle. And several of them are drawn specifically from the corpus of the Prophet's sayings and conduct that the Umayyads' own caliph had commissioned, funded and distributed across the empire thirty years earlier.

On the impiety count, honesty requires two statements. First, that it is the weakest of the five evidentially, because it is transmitted almost entirely by the regime that overthrew them and is exactly the sort of charge a successor invents. Second, that there is one anchor which is not testimony at all: **the buildings are still standing.** Quṣayr ʿAmra in the Jordanian steppe has a bath-house whose plaster carries hunting scenes, unclothed bathers, a domed zodiac, and a painting of six kings. That is not a chronicler's slander. Whatever else the desert estates were — agricultural centres, meeting-places for tribal politics, hunting lodges — a caliph or a prince paid for those walls, and the men who later said the dynasty had lived like kings had, on this point, a wall to point at.

The morning after

Kufa fell in 749, and what happened in the following weeks is the most instructive episode in the whole collapse.

Abū Salama al-Khallāl — a Kufan, originally a slave and then a freedman, who had led the *daʿwa* in Kufa since about 744 — was for some weeks between September and November the effective ruler of the city and of the movement. He used the interval to try to install an **ʿAlid** as caliph at the head of the revolution.

The Khurasani army refused. It proclaimed instead Abū al-ʿAbbās al-Saffāḥ, brother of the imam Ibrāhīm, whom Marwān II had arrested and who had died in Umayyad custody at Ḥarrān. Abū Salama stayed in office briefly and was then assassinated by the Abbasids on account of his pro-ʿAlid leanings.

So the usual formulation — that the ʿAlids supplied the sentiment and got nothing — understates it. **The attempt was actually made, by the man who had run the movement in its founding city, and it was overruled by the army and answered with a killing.** The ambiguity in the slogan was resolved by whoever had the soldiers, which is how such ambiguities are always resolved.

The rest follows quickly and in the pattern the framework predicts.

The Zāb, on or about 25 January 750: Marwān's much larger army broken by Abbasid forces under ʿAbd Allāh b. ʿAlī. Over three hundred members of the Umayyad house are reported killed at that battle alone. Damascus falls in April. Marwān is run down and killed in Egypt on 6 August. The family is hunted; one grandson of Hishām, ʿAbd al-Raḥmān, gets to Spain and founds a dynasty there.

ʿAbd Allāh b. Muʿāwiya, the Ṭālibid claimant whose western Persian domain had sheltered Khārijites, defeated Umayyads and even a few Abbasids, fled to Khurasan and was executed by Abū Muslim.

And Abū Muslim himself — who by then governed Khurasan as a near-sovereign prince — was summoned to court by al-Manṣūr in 755, came unarmed, and was killed at the audience.

Count what the morning disclosed. The Abbasids were Hāshimites, descendants of the Prophet's uncle al-ʿAbbās: **Quraysh, exactly as the Umayyads were Quraysh.** One aristocracy of the same tribe replaced another. The party that had supplied most of the mobilising sentiment received nothing and had its advocate killed. The man who had built and commanded the army was executed within five years. The province that had risen became the new dynasty's power base and its people, the *Khurāsāniyya*, became the new standing army — which is to say the new arrangement's Syrians.

What the common man did, exactly

The framework insists the accounting be honest in both directions, and it can be done here with unusual precision.

The Bashmurians of the Nile Delta refused to pay their tax in 749, drove out the collectors, sacked Rosetta, and drew down a punitive campaign in which Marwān II ordered the razing of Coptic villages, churches and monasteries. They did not seize any apparatus, install anybody or affect the outcome of anything. What they did was make

the province expensive at a moment when the man holding it could least afford it — and the incoming regime granted them an amnesty and exempted them from tax for two fiscal years. **That is the price-of-a-policy mechanism operating exactly as described: real power, exercised as cost, and the discount paid out by whoever turned up next.**

The Khurasani villagers who came to the *da'wa*'s meetings, some of them for the food, supplied numbers to an organisation they had not built and a candidate they had not been told the name of.

The converts supplied the sharpest count in the indictment. What they got was not a decree of emancipation. The *walā'* requirement for entry into Muslim society did not survive the fall of the Umayyads, but it was not abolished — it *lapsed*, because the Abbasids favoured a universal reading of a religion that was no longer the exclusive property of an Arab elite, and because their own power rested on a province full of exactly such men. The grievance was remedied by a change in the ruling coalition's composition, not by a concession to the aggrieved.

None of these people cut the opening. All of them went through it. Both halves of that sentence are true and neither cancels the other.

Reading the collapse against the framework

Three findings, and the second is the contribution.

On exhaustion, a variant the card should carry. The framework names exhaustion in great-power war — a floor shattered from outside, an army dissolved, survivors who must be armed and paid. That is not what happened here. The Umayyads lost no great war, kept their army, and were still winning battles in 746. What failed was the *outlet*: a hundred years of expansion that had been absorbing the caste's surplus claimants and paying the arrangement's bills stopped producing in 740, and the arrangement had no other way to pay them. **An order can be exhausted not by losing a war but by running out of war.** The diagnostic difference is important, because the two look nothing alike in the record: an army destroyed leaves casualty lists and a lost frontier, while an outlet closing leaves a treasury under strain, a court quarrelling about shares, and provincial armies with nothing to do. And the interval is short. From the frontier stopping to the family being hunted through Egypt is ten

years — the same order of magnitude as the two years between the Hundred Years War's outlet closing and the opening of the Wars of the Roses.

On the unnamed candidate, which is this module's contribution. *Al-riḍā min āl Muḥammad*, with the name withheld by standing order, is the most efficient mobilising device this collection has met, and its logic generalises. A counter-elite in a doctrinally divided field faces a coordination problem the incumbent does not: its potential allies want incompatible things and will fight each other if asked to choose. A slogan that specifies a *criterion* and withholds the *name* dissolves that problem entirely, because it lets every faction supply its own referent, cannot be falsified before victory, and offers nothing to argue about.

But the device is a loan, not a gift, and the repayment terms are exact. **The purge that follows a revolution is proportional to the ambiguity of the slogan that made it.** Every constituency that filled in the blank differently must, at the moment of victory, be told it was wrong — and told by people who now have an army and did not have one before. Abū Salama tried to name an ʿAlid and was killed. ʿAbd Allāh b. Muʿāwiya, a claimant of the Prophet's family by the other line, was killed. Abū Muslim, who had assembled the whole thing, was killed. The ʿAlids, who had supplied the sentiment for seventy years, were excluded and would spend the next century in revolt against the dynasty their grievance had installed. None of that is a betrayal in any interesting sense; it is the bill for the instrument, and it was always going to come.

And on the floor destroyed by its own holder. One sub-mechanism in this collapse deserves recording because it is not in the card and it is not rare. In 746 Marwān II, fighting for his own survival, razed the walls of the cities of Syria and destroyed Homs — the province that was his dynasty's home, its capital's location for eighty-three years, and the recruiting ground of the only army that had ever reliably fought for it. He had already moved the capital out of it. He did this because in that year Syria was in the hands of the faction opposing him, and a Syria he could not hold was better to him unwalled than walled.

He was right for eighteen months and catastrophically wrong afterwards, because in 750 he needed a Syria that would fight for him and had spent the intervening years making sure it would not. **An apex fighting for his own survival will sometimes destroy the asset that made him an apex, because in the short run that asset is in his enemy's hands** — and the asset does not come back when the enemy does.

Which returns this study to the audit of the previous module and closes it. The chain was cut at three places by policy: the Iraqi nobility struck off the register in 701; the conquered's own administrators displaced across the eighth century; and the converts never seated at all. The fourth cut was made by the last caliph on his own province in 746. The men who ended the arrangement were, at every point, men with standing and means whom the arrangement had stopped paying — and the last of them to stop being paid was Syria.

A note on sources.

The one primary phrase quoted is the slogan *al-riḍā min āl Muḥammad*, together with the report that the missionaries were under standing orders not to disclose whom it referred to; both come through the narrative tradition, and the report of the order is preserved in the material Elton Daniel analyses in his study of Khurasan under Abbasid rule.

Every event in this module reaches us through the historiography of the victors, and the caution stated at the outset of this study reaches its maximum here. The Abbasid revolution is the one episode in the whole case where the compilers were writing the founding narrative of the regime they served, and al-Ṭabarī's account of it is a dynastic origin story before it is anything else. Elton Daniel's warning is the right one to carry: events have been altered, dates changed, and characterisations of individuals distorted to suit each writer's bias for or against the conspirators, and what can be traced through the confusion is the movement's evolution rather than its particulars. The identification of individual *nuqabā'* and commanders as Arab or *mawlā* is especially unsafe, because — as the same scholarship notes — an "Arab" could be a *de jure* member of a tribe, a *mawlā* could be a pure Arab who had become a client of another tribe, and both the *shu'ūbī* partisans and their opponents compiled lists of the *nuqabā'* engineered to prove opposite ethnic points. The named men used here — Mālik b. al-Haytham al-Khuzā'ī, Khāzim b. Khuzayma al-Tamīmī, Qaḥṭaba b. Shabīb al-Ṭā'ī — are those on whom the identification is least disputed, and the Persianisation detail about Khāzim follows Hugh Kennedy.

The dating of the frontier closure to 122/740 and the reading of the Berber Revolt as the end of expansion are Khalid Blankinship's. The sequence of the third civil war —

the killing of al-Walīd II in April 744, Yazīd III's entry into Damascus and death within months, Ibrāhīm's deposition, Marwān II's accession in December, the transfer of the capital to Ḥarrān, the Syrian revolt, the razing of the city walls and the destruction of Homs in 746, al-Ḍaḥḥāk b. Qays al-Shaybānī's Khārijite rising and its suppression at Mosul, and the expulsion of Naṣr b. Sayyār from Merv by al-Ḥārith b. Surayj and al-Kirmānī — follows G. R. Hawting's reconstruction and the standard chronology; the point that no precise chronological boundary can be drawn between the third *fitna* and the Abbasid revolution is Hawting's own and is adopted here.

The organisation of the *da'wa* — the Kufan phase from about 98/716, the move to Khurasan, the imam's concealed identity, the deputy in Kufa, the naming of twelve *nuqabā'* at Merv on prophetic precedent, the financing by Bukayr b. Māhān, and the distribution of food at meetings — follows Daniel. Abū Salama al-Khallāl's servile origin, his leadership of the Kufan *da'wa* from about 744, his weeks as effective ruler in the autumn of 749, his attempt to install an ʿAlid, and his assassination are reported consistently. Abū Muslim's own ethnic origin is debated in the sources themselves and is left open here. The figure of over three hundred Umayyads killed at the Zāb is traditional. The date of the battle is given as 25 January 750 in most accounts and 16 January in some. Quṣayr ʿAmra's frescoes are used here as physical evidence and nothing more: they establish what was painted on a wall, not what any caliph drank.

MODULE 11

NO LAYER OF DESTRUCTION

Module 11 · the grim accounting — what this order cost in the sword's column and in the metabolic one; why the second column is very nearly empty and what that does and does not prove; and what is missing from a reckoning conducted only in the things a spade can find

The spade finds nothing

Begin with the awkward fact, because a study that buries it has already begun cheating.

There is no archaeological trace of the Arab conquests. Hugh Kennedy states the position plainly: no battlefield has yielded up **"a harvest of bones and old weapons"**, and there is no town or village anywhere in the conquered territories with a destruction or burning layer that can be dated to and attributed to the conquest. In Egypt, Alexandria and Heliopolis show continuity of material culture rather than the horizon a catastrophic sacking leaves. At Baysān in Palestine the excavation shows continuity and development. The primary production of glass in Syria-Palestine carries on without an interruption that anybody can date to 636. Landholding patterns and rural taxation persisted largely unchanged, administered by the same men in the same languages on the same registers.

Alan Walmsley's assessment of the archaeology of early Islamic Syria-Palestine argues for considerable cultural and economic continuity rather than devastation, and for a period of social richness in the early Islamic centuries — with, he is careful to add, gains that were chronologically and regionally uneven.

The honest counterweight belongs immediately beside that, because Walmsley has been criticised for weighting Jordanian sites too heavily. Surveys in northern Syria do not show seamless continuity from the Late Roman period but a *decrease* in settlement in the late seventh and eighth centuries, in places remaining low until the mid-tenth.

The seventh century saw contraction of rural settlement in some regions. The picture is uneven and it is not costless. It is, on the physical evidence, not a catastrophe either.

Now note what that does to the instruments. The tools this corpus owns — casualty counts, extraction tonnages, displacement figures, destruction layers — are built to register *commissions*, and where the harm is not a commission they return a null. This module will therefore produce a modest sword column and a nearly empty metabolic one, and a third of its business is to say clearly what those two results do not prove.

The sword's column

Count what can be counted, in ranges, and refuse totals where the record cannot support one.

The founding conquests cannot be totalled. Yarmūk, Qādisiyya and Nihāwand have no reliable figures on either side: the Arabic tradition gives Byzantine dead at Yarmūk in the scores of thousands, modern estimates put the Arab force somewhere between fifteen and thirty-five thousand, and nobody credits the Byzantine numbers. The absence of a battlefield archaeology means there is no independent check. What can be said is that the campaigns were short, that surrenders by treaty were common, and that the archaeological record shows nothing like the destruction a long war of extermination leaves.

The internal wars are where the killing is, and they can be listed.

The *ridda* campaigns of 632–33, against Arabian tribes that had submitted once and declined to submit again. The Battle of the Camel outside Baṣra in December 656. Ṣiffīn in the summer of 657. Nahrawān in 658, where of roughly four thousand Khārijites about twelve hundred took an amnesty and the great majority of the rest were killed, reported variously between fifteen hundred and twenty-eight hundred. Karbalāʾ on 10 Muḥarram 61 — the Prophet's grandson and some seventy companions. The lava field east of Medina on 26 August 683, where twelve thousand Syrians broke the city's defenders and sacked the town. The siege of Mecca from late September to November 683, with mangonels and the Kaʿba burnt, and the second siege in 692. Marj Rāhiṭ on 18 August 684, with conventional figures of four thousand dead on the winning side and fifteen thousand on the losing, including eighty nobles.

The *ayyām* — the tit-for-tat revenge raids that ran for years afterwards, day-long affairs, uncounted. ʿAyn al-Warda in January 685, where about three thousand Penitents were nearly annihilated over three days. Maskin in 691. Dayr al-Jamājim in 701, and the reprisals afterwards, for which al-Ṭabarī's reported executions in Baṣra run from about eleven thousand to about a hundred and thirty thousand — a range so wide that it is not a figure at all but a written confession that nobody counted. The Berber revolt of 740–43, in which Umayyad armies were destroyed in the west. The third civil war of 744–47, ending with Marwān II razing the walls of the cities of Syria and destroying Homs. The punitive campaign of 749–50 in the Nile Delta, in which Coptic villages, churches and monasteries were pillaged and razed. And the Zāb on 25 January 750, at which over three hundred members of the Umayyad house are reported killed, followed by the hunting of the family across three continents.

The total figure sometimes given for al-Ḥajjāj's career — a hundred and twenty thousand killed — is a later chronicler's, is doubted by modern analysis as inflationary, and is not used here.

But look at the shape of the list rather than the arithmetic, because the shape is the finding. **Almost every death in this order's sword column is a Muslim killed by other Muslims, and the great majority are Arabs killed by Arabs.** The conquered populations appear in the casualty record chiefly at the two ends — thinly at the conquest, and once at the very close, in the Delta, when a doomed caliph took his frustration out on Coptic villages while an Abbasid army came down on him from the east.

That is an unusual profile for a conquest order and it should be named as one: **a conquest whose violence, measured over ninety years, was overwhelmingly directed inward, at the conquerors.**

The metabolic column

The second column asks a different question. An advanced civilisation lifts its population above what the land would carry unaided, by coordination and by intensive agriculture; when a conquest or a collapse disrupts the coordination, the note is called, and the debt is paid not in combat dead but in famine and disease.

Test it here, and the answer turns entirely on timing.

The Sawād

Iraq is the case. The Nahrawān — the *Katul al-Kisrawī*, built out by Khosrow I in the sixth century, running some two hundred and twenty-five kilometres from above Samarra southeast toward Kut, reaching a hundred and twenty metres wide and twelve deep in sections, feeding a dendritic network of distributaries across an enormous area — was the most intensive hydraulic system in the world, and like all such systems it existed only as long as somebody desilted it every year.

What did the conquest do to it?

It maintained it. The Rashidun and Umayyad administrations restored and kept up the existing irrigation infrastructure in order to revive the agricultural productivity that paid for everything; ʿUmar is credited with efforts to renew lands that had been flooded or neglected since the late Sasanian period; al-Ḥajjāj undertook large-scale canal digging in Iraq alongside the founding of Wāsiṭ. Under the Abbasids the system reached its absolute peak, supplying the eastern quarters of Baghdad and serving as the capital's breadbasket under Hārūn al-Rashīd.

And when was the note called?

In 937. In a civil war between the Turkish commander Bajkam and Ibn Rāʾiq, the latter attempted to impede Bajkam's advance from Wāsiṭ to Baghdad by flooding the region between them. The move barely obstructed the advance. It destroyed the agriculture of the region that had been feeding the capital. The Nahrawān was never effectively repaired, and the area was still depopulated in the year 2000. Kennedy's judgement is that the breach of the Nahrawān was the most dramatic instance of a widespread phenomenon of the time and symbolic of the end of Abbasid power. Nominal tax revenue from southern Iraq had already fallen by something over half between 846 and 918.

Two hundred and eighty-seven years after the conquest. One hundred and eighty-seven after the Umayyads fell. The metabolic note on the richest agricultural region in the world was called by a different dynasty, in a different civil war, and by a deliberate act of a warlord who wanted to slow an army down for a fortnight.

And the earlier damage runs the other way too. The Tigris altered its course after the great flood of **628–629** — in the final years of the Sasanian empire, in the exhaustion of the war of 602–628, before an Arab army had crossed the Euphrates.

What the conquest inherited in the Sawād was a hydraulic system already damaged by the previous order's collapse, and what it did with it was repair it.

The plague

Which leaves the largest demographic fact of the Umayyad century, and it belongs in this column even though no policy caused it.

The first plague pandemic did not end with Justinian. It returned in cycles for two hundred years. The plague of ʿAmwās struck Syria in 638–39, at the end of the conquest of the province, and killed up to twenty-five thousand soldiers and their families — including most of the Arab army's high command — as well as causing heavy loss and displacement among the indigenous Christians. Recurrences ran through the whole Umayyad period on a roughly cyclical pattern, with a long gap of some thirty years after ʿAmwās, and the pandemic **disappeared in 132/749, as suddenly as it had come.**

Michael Dols' suggestion, taken up in the subsequent literature, is that the endemic character of plague across this period may have significantly retarded population growth and debilitated society in Syria and Iraq through the Umayyad century, and that the recurrences may have contributed to the dynasty's fall.

Three things follow.

The plague made the dynasty. ʿAmwās killed Yazīd b. Abī Sufyān, governor of Syria, and the command passed to his brother Muʿāwiya. Every single thing in this study descends from that vacancy.

It reframes the desert palaces. The Umayyad caliphs are reported to have withdrawn to the *quṣūr* during plague season and to have lived out there as Bedouins until the danger passed. The buildings that the successor tradition cited as monuments of luxury — and which this study has used, correctly, as the one honest physical anchor for the impiety charge — were also, and at the same time, refuges from an epidemic. Both readings hold. Physical evidence is like that: it tells you what was built and never why.

And the caution. Lee Mordechai and colleagues have argued in recent work that the Justinianic plague's demographic impact has been substantially overstated — that the textual and archaeological record contains few plague references, that coin circulation stayed stable through the 540s, that Roman legislation did not decline, and that the picture of a blanket Mediterranean catastrophe needs rethinking. That

argument is live and applies to the recurrences as much as to the first wave. The plague therefore enters this ledger as *probably large, disputed in magnitude, and not attributable to anyone's policy*.

The timing remains striking and is offered as no more than that. The pandemic vanished in 749. The dynasty was destroyed in 750.

The column no instrument reads

Which brings the module to the part the framework insists on when an order was cheap: conduct the accounting in omissions, because the tools return a null where the harm is a thing not done, and a corpus that does not correct for this will systematically rate the parsimonious orders as the benign ones.

The convert's exclusion. The single largest harm this order inflicted has no casualty figure, no destruction layer and no line in any tax schedule. A man who accepted the ruling religion was, for most of the period in most provinces, kept off the register, kept on the tax, and admitted to the conquering society only as a named individual's hereditary client, a status his children would inherit. How many people that was cannot be counted; what it cost them cannot be measured; and it appears in the record only, seventy years later, as the first count of an indictment written by men who had by then acquired the standing to write one.

The formation withheld. The conquered were not taught, not preached to, not offered anything, and when they came anyway they were sent home — al-Ḥajjāj's expulsion of the converts from Kūfa and Baṣra around the year 700 being the exact and documented instance. Read as policy it is efficient and rational. Read as a cost it is a generation of people informed that the thing they had joined did not want them, by a state that had a number behind the refusal.

The sawyer. A Coptic village on the Nile paid four solidi for six months of one man's wages and keep, to work on a building in another country, dedicated to a religion not its own, whose walls were being covered in an argument against its beliefs. Nobody was killed. No rate was raised. The transaction was entirely lawful, entirely documented and entirely ordinary. It appears in no casualty count and no extraction tonnage. There were thousands of such orders and the papyrus survives for a handful.

The foreclosed path. And the omission this study has been building toward: there was no opposition career. A man who thought the caliph wrong had two moves, silence and armed revolt, and no third. The cost of that architecture is a column of men — Ḥujr b. ʿAdī, Saʿīd b. Jubayr, Ghaylān al-Dimashqī, four thousand Penitents who marched to a battle they had already calculated they would lose — who in an order with a chamber would have made speeches and in this one made corpses. That harm is invisible to every instrument except a casualty list, on which it appears misfiled as something else.

What the order actually did

The framework requires the credit at full weight and in the same breath, so here it is, without hedging.

It ended the Roman–Persian wars. Those wars had run intermittently for four centuries and had, in the lifetime of the men who made the conquest, wrecked both empires — Jerusalem sacked, Egypt occupied, Ctesiphon reached, the Sasanian throne passing among murdered claimants, an emperor melting church plate for coin. Whatever else the seventh century was in the Middle East, it was the first period in four hundred years in which the great powers were not fighting across Mesopotamia. That peace is a real good and it was purchased by removing one of the two combatants.

It ended a religious persecution. The Miaphysites of Egypt and Syria, the Church of the East in Iraq, and the Jewish communities of both empires received an authority above them that did not care what they believed. The Coptic patriarch came out of thirteen years in the marshes on a letter. That is a benefit delivered immediately, to millions, at no cost to them.

It maintained the machine. The canals of the Sawād were kept up and the damage of the late Sasanian collapse repaired. Trajan's canal to the Red Sea was re-excavated and Egyptian grain moved along it for a century. A currency was reformed and standardised, a chancery Arabised, a postal system run, a standing salaried army maintained, a body of law and judges established.

And it built an empire out of a tribal confederation in two generations, which is a genuine achievement of coordination and should be called one.

And it presided over — did not create, frequently obstructed, and in the end was destroyed by — the decades in which a creed hardened from a movement's claim into the ground of a civilisation.

Reading the accounting against the framework

Two findings, and the first is the contribution.

The metabolic note runs on its own schedule, and the schedule is not the political one.

The framework predicts that the mass death a collapse collects is proportional to how much genuine, life-sustaining coordination the order was performing — catastrophic where the coordination *was* the subsistence metabolism, near-bloodless where it was only governance and commerce. On its face this case looks like a counter-example: the Umayyads performed an enormous amount of life-sustaining coordination, and their collapse collected almost none of the corresponding death.

It is not a counter-example. It is a specification of the rule that the card was missing. **The note is called not when an order falls but when the coordination stops** — and a change of dynasty inside one civilisation almost never stops it, because the incoming party wants the machine.

The Abbasids inherited the *dīwāns*, the canals, the cadastres, the pagarchs, the roads, the mint and the tax registers, and improved them. They wanted the Sawād working because they intended to tax it. They wanted the canal desilted because Baghdad ate. Two hundred years later, the men fighting over the same ground found it more useful flooded than working, because by then nobody's strategy ran through the harvest of 938.

Which yields a diagnostic the corpus can use on any case: **before attributing a metabolic catastrophe to a regime change, ask whether the incoming party wanted the machine.** A successor that intends to rule the same ground has every incentive to preserve the coordination and will usually pay to do it; a conqueror from outside the civilisation, a state collapse with no successor, or a faction that regards the ground as terrain rather than as revenue will not. The Abbasids in 750 wanted it. Ibn Rā'iq in 937 wanted it flooded. That is the whole difference, and it is a difference in the *successor's* position and not in the falling order's.

And the second, which is why the ledger is kept at all.

Every item in the Umayyad accounting was, within two centuries, simply how the world was. The fiscal categories had become jurisprudence. The map had become geography. The calendar had become time. The register that had decided who was inside and who was outside had dissolved, its exclusions no longer needing enforcement because the excluded had converted and their descendants were the majority. The Coptic villager's great-great-grandchildren were mostly Muslim and had no notion that an ancestor had been billed four solidi for a sawyer.

That forgetting is not amnesia and it is not a trick anybody played. It is what formation does when it is given generations, and this study has had the rare opportunity of watching it happen from the inside — a creed too young in 690 to have been installed in a single adult's childhood, which by 900 was the furniture of reality for a fifth of the species and remains so. **An arrangement's origin in armed force is the first thing a durable order loses, and losing it is the final stage of the build rather than a failure of memory.**

Which is the case for keeping the column, and it is not a moral case about these particular men. This study has refused throughout to say they were worse than other men in their position, because the evidence does not support it and the framework does not permit it. The case is narrower and harder. **An accounting nobody keeps is one that gets settled by whoever writes last** — and here we know exactly who wrote last, because he cut a name out of a mosaic in Jerusalem, put his own in its place, and forgot to change the date. For twelve hundred years, that was the record.

A note on sources.

The one direct quotation is a fragment of Hugh Kennedy's statement that no battlefield of the Arab conquests has yielded "a harvest of bones and old weapons"; the accompanying observation that no town or village carries a destruction layer attributable to the conquests is paraphrased from the same passage. The archaeological picture follows Alan Walmsley's *Early Islamic Syria: An Archaeological Assessment* (2007), Jodi Magness on early Islamic Palestine, and Peter Pentz's *The Invisible Conquest*; the criticism that Walmsley over-weights Jordanian sites, and the northern Syrian survey evidence for settlement decrease in the late seventh and eighth centuries,

are stated in the text rather than omitted, and the reader should treat the continuity thesis as strong but regionally qualified. The Egyptian evidence for continuity of material culture at Alexandria and Heliopolis, and for undisturbed landholding and taxation, follows Petra Sijpesteijn.

The casualty figures are almost all traditional and are given as such, with ranges where the tradition gives ranges: Nahrawān (roughly 1,500–2,800 killed of some 4,000, with about 1,200 amnestied); al-Ḥarra (12,000 Syrian troops, the casualties inflated in the reports); Marj Rāhiṭ (4,000 and 15,000, conventional); ʿAyn al-Warda (about 3,000 Penitents); the Zāb (over 300 Umayyads at the battle). The range for the executions in Baṣra after Dayr al-Jamājim — about eleven thousand to about a hundred and thirty thousand — is al-Ṭabarī's and is used here as evidence about the tradition rather than about the killing. Al-Ḥajjāj's career total of 120,000 is a later chronicler's, is doubted by modern analysis, and is explicitly not used.

For the Sawād: the Nahrawān's Sasanian construction under Khosrow I, its dimensions and extent, its maintenance under the Rashidun and Umayyads, its peak under the Abbasids, and its breach during the war between Bajkam and Ibn Rāʾiq in 937 with the consequent permanent ruin of the region's agriculture follow Michael Morony's and Hugh Kennedy's treatments; Kennedy's assessment of the breach as symbolic of the end of Abbasid power is quoted in paraphrase. The 52 per cent nominal fall in southern Iraqi tax revenue between 846 and 918 is from the economic literature on the collapse of southern Mesopotamia and is cited for magnitude rather than precision. The alteration of the Tigris' course after the flood of 628–629 is standard.

On plague: the plague of ʿAmwās, its date of 638–39, the reported toll of up to 25,000 soldiers and relatives, the death of the Syrian high command including Yazīd b. Abī Sufyān, and the cyclical recurrences down to 132/749 follow Michael Dols' "Plague in Early Islamic History" (1974) and Lawrence Conrad's subsequent work. Dols' suggestion that endemic plague retarded population growth and debilitated Syrian and Iraqi society across the Umayyad period, and may have contributed to the dynasty's fall, is his hypothesis and is credited as such rather than asserted. The report that the Umayyad caliphs withdrew to the desert palaces during plague season is transmitted in the secondary literature from the Arabic sources and is used here as one reading of the *quṣūr* alongside the others, not as a replacement for them. **Lee**

Mordechai and colleagues' argument that the Justinianic plague's demographic impact has been substantially exaggerated is a live and serious challenge to this whole column, and is stated in the text. No figure for total plague mortality is offered because none can be supported.

MODULE 12

AN OLD ROBE, NOT A GOOD ONE

Module 12 · convergence and divergence — the case read against the corpus; the one variable that turns out to run underneath all twelve modules; and the strongest case for the defence, stated in its own voice and answered

The comparison this case was built for

Set the Umayyad Caliphate beside the Qing and the two look, at the outset, like the same object.

Both are conquest castes of vanishing proportion — a hundred and ten to a hundred and fifty thousand banner troops entering a country of perhaps a hundred and fifty to two hundred million; a few tens of thousands of Arabs holding the Sasanian empire entire and Byzantium's richest provinces. Both faced a ratio at which the word *conquest* stops describing anything, because no force of that size holds a country of that size by force. Both therefore had to capture an apparatus rather than build one, and both did: the Manchus took the examination system, the Six Ministries, the ritual calendar and the Mandate of Heaven without altering a word; the Arabs took the Sasanian cadastre, the Byzantine pagarchy, the poll tax, the land tax and the exemption categories, changing the destination of the payment and very little else.

Both ran a **borrowed robe**. And here the received expectation reverses, which is why this pairing is worth the whole study.

The Qing robe was borrowed *completely*. Nothing in the Qing legitimating apparatus was Manchu — not the Mandate, not the Son of Heaven, not the sacrifices, not the canon, not the examination curriculum, not the historiographical obligation. A foreign dynasty ran a wholly Chinese doctrine for two hundred and sixty-eight years.

The Umayyad robe was, in the ordinary sense, far *less* borrowed. It was the creed of their own community, in their own language, revealed to a man of their own tribe. And they could not run it for ninety.

The variable is not how foreign the robe is. This study's answer is that it is **how old** — and that the age operates through a mechanism the corpus can now state.

Where the case converges

Take the convergences first, because they are the evidence that position logic is doing the work and no hidden hand is required.

A conqueror meeting a mature fiscal apparatus captures it and does not touch the land. The Arabs found the Sasanian cadastre and the Byzantine registers and left the cultivator on his field; the Manchus found the *lijia* and the land tax and did the same; the Ptolemies found the Egyptian grain administration and ran it; the Mughals found and kept. Where the conquered order has already converted its wealth into a countable, taxable thing, the settlement is a distribution problem and not a property problem, and the conqueror's fight is with his own coalition rather than with the peasantry. That is convergence by position, and none of these parties consulted the others.

A conquest caste is registered, and the register becomes the boundary. The Umayyad *dīwān*, the Manchu banner rolls, the Ottoman *timar* register: an entry in a book maintained by the state, defining who is inside. Three orders, three continents, arrived at independently, because the problem — who is owed a share and who is not — has a very short list of workable answers, and a list is the cheapest of them.

And a conquest caste paid in claims can be disciplined without a war. Iraq's armies were struck off the roll in 701 and ceased to be a claimant on the treasury without a further battle; the Qing culled the banner rolls rather than reduce the claim. Both states discovered the same lever, and it is a lever no tenurial order possesses.

Legitimacy is borrowed from the audience's own currency and never minted. ʿAbd al-Malik's Christian court poet writing panegyric in the pre-Islamic *qaṣīda* for a Syrian tribal aristocracy; Kangxi performing nine prostrations at the grave of a dead Chinese teacher he had no need to honour; Timur marrying into the Genghisid line to rule as son-in-law. In every case the apex pays a real, avoidable price in the coin the needed audience already accepts, and the payment is the evidence.

Where it diverges, and what drove the divergence

Now the divergences, and each one names a variable.

The succession. Three states met the identical problem and answered it three ways. The Ottomans legalised fratricide — kill the brothers at accession, remove every rival in a night, lose a generation's talent each time. The Qing used secret designation — the heir's name sealed in a box behind a tablet, so no candidate can build a faction because none knows he is the candidate. The Umayyads published two names in advance and took oaths to both. Kill the rivals, hide the name, announce the name. The Umayyad answer was the worst of the three and was also the only one available to them, because their whole difficulty was that nobody accepted their title, and a succession nobody has sworn to is not a succession at all. **A dynasty whose legitimacy is contested cannot use a secret mechanism, because secrecy requires a bureaucracy that will honour a piece of paper it has not seen.**

The register's grain. The Manchu banner reorganisation deliberately cut *across* clan membership, so that a banner was a unit of the state and a man's company was not his cousins. The Umayyad *dīwān* enrolled, paid, quartered and mustered by tribe. Same problem, opposite instrument, and the results are as opposite as results get: no Manchu clan fracture in two hundred and sixty-eight years, and nothing but tribal fracture in ninety. **The identities a state pays through are the identities its factions form along**, and that is a decision a founder makes once, at the register's design, without any idea what he has decided.

The tailors. The Qing state paid for almost nothing in a scholar's education — the candidate's family bore the books and the decades — and paid for exactly one thing, the certificate, which it manufactured, conferred and could revoke. The Umayyad state paid for the corpus and never issued a certificate. One bought the credential and let the students buy the books; the other bought the books and never issued a credential. That single difference is the largest divergence in the pairing and it is not a difference of intention. The Qing could buy a credential because a credentialing institution already existed and had for centuries. **The Umayyads could not, because there was nothing yet to certify anyone against.**

The colonial bend, tested

This corpus contains a great many studies of conquests that answered to a distant metropole, and they share a shape: a robe cut for the metropole rather than the conquered, formation withheld from the majority, a seam split in two by distance, extraction sorted by caste, and a collapse driven by the metropole's will emptying. Test that shape here and most of it fails, which is itself informative.

The reversed robe: absent. There was no metropole. Damascus was not answering to anybody; the caliph's claims were addressed to rival Muslim claimants, to the People of the Book, and to his own tribal army — three audiences all *inside* the territory he held. Nothing in the Umayyad robe was cut for a distant public whose taxes and sons funded the enterprise, because no such public existed.

Formation withheld: confirmed, and for the framework's exact reason. The conquered were not preached to, schooled or recruited, and when they converted anyway the state sent them home. Forming them would have meant seating them, and seating them meant paying them. The prediction holds precisely.

The seam split by distance: absent, and its absence is diagnostic. The colonial version of this mechanism — what is hidden from the metropole is what the conquered live, and the order's core task is keeping the two ends from meeting — has no application here, because there was nowhere to hide anything from. This is why the Umayyad state produced no laundered labour draft, no euphemism, no elaborate legal fiction to make a seizure look like a transaction. It requisitioned a sawyer by name and trade, in Greek, on a slip of papyrus, and gave no justification, because nobody it feared was going to read it.

Extraction sorted by caste: confirmed, and inherited rather than invented. The Sasanians had already exempted warriors, priests and scribes from the poll tax; the Arabs kept the architecture and moved into the exempt slot.

Collapse by the metropole's will emptying: absent. Nothing emptied at a distance. The floor cracked from inside, in the way the corpus predicts of an order with no external patron: fracture in the ruling family, factional war in the co-opted army, and an outlet that stopped paying.

So the colonial bend applies at two points out of five, and the three that fail all fail for the same reason: **there was no distant audience.** Which is worth stating as a finding in its own right, because it identifies what the metropole is actually doing in the colonial cases. It is not merely the source of the money and the men. **It is the constraint that produces the elaboration** — the statutes, the fictions, the euphemisms, the scrupulousness that this corpus has repeatedly found to be the measure of a real limit. Remove the metropole and the elaboration disappears with it, and what is left is a state that takes what it wants and writes it down plainly. The Umayyad papyri are franker than any colonial ordinance, and the frankness is not honesty. It is the absence of anyone worth deceiving.

The Menu, and what this case adds

Module 8 classified the case as a blend: **Co-opt, with armed service as the consideration**, running over **Divide-and-balance**, over **Export** until 740. Each of the three needs its addition to the corpus stated.

On Co-opt. The card holds that the diagnostic fact is the consideration, and that a grant purchasing armed service installs a civil-war risk in the same clause that solves the coordination problem, while the modern colonial grant deletes the service clause and leaves a dependant with a title. This case supplies a third form the card does not carry: **service bought with a revocable entitlement rather than with a thing.** The Syrian chiefs at Jābiya undertook to fight, and were paid in shares of revenue and access to office rather than in land they could hold against the payer. That combination gives the state a disarming instrument no European monarch ever possessed — the register can be edited — and it produces a caste with permanent capacity for civil war and no asset to make one with. It is very nearly the ideal answer to the coordination problem and it failed anyway, because a man whose entire standing is an entry in somebody else's ledger has exactly one grievance available to him for his whole life, and everyone can see who keeps the book.

On Divide-and-balance. The card holds the *engineered fracture* — a division built by policy rather than inherited — pending a second case. This is a partial second case with a qualification worth having: the Qays–Yaman division was not engineered at the founding. It was created by one battle in 684, in which the victors were given the spoils

of a victory over the other half of the same army, and it was then *managed* by later caliphs as though it were an instrument, with balanced appointments and neutral outsiders brought in for Iraq. **A fracture can be a by-product that later rulers operate as a system**, which is arguably worse than a designed one, because a designed division can in principle be undesigned and this one could only be tilted.

On Export. The card's clearest failure case is England's Wars of the Roses arriving within two years of the Hundred Years War's outlet closing. This case supplies a second, with a fuller mechanism and a longer fuse: the frontier stops in 740, the dynasty's own overproduction detonates in 744, the Khurasan movement rises in 747, the family is hunted in 750. **Ten years from the outlet shutting to the end**, and the addition to the card is that this is a distinct variety of exhaustion. The army was intact and still winning battles; the treasury was strained but functioning. **An order can be exhausted not by losing a war but by running out of war**, and the two look nothing alike in the record.

And one fiction the settlement families do not yet name. The card lists vacancy, recognition and divisibility, all of them fictions about ownership that move land to somebody. What operated here moved nothing: the declaration that the conquered soil was the community's common property in perpetuity, including its unborn generations, and therefore not divisible among the men who had taken it. Its job was neither dispossession nor the binding of an elite but **the prevention of a conquering army from becoming a landed class** — proposed here as a fourth family, *perpetual dedication*, reached for where a conqueror has captured a working revenue system, wants it kept intact, and needs a reason his own armed men will accept for not dividing it. Read the extravagance of the terms as always: unborn Muslims and the end of time are what it takes to refuse an army its due.

The one variable

Twelve modules have produced a good deal, and the discipline of this collection is that one contribution built across a study is worth more than twelve asserted in sequence. So state the spine.

Every finding in this study hangs off a single fact: **the Umayyads held a doctrine that was too young to have been tailored.**

A creed four centuries old has been let out. Generations of interpreters have glossed its awkward passages, and those interpreters were on somebody's establishment while they did it, so that the ruler's prerogatives are already written into the text he professes. *Religion and kingship are brothers* is a sentence about the king's rights sitting inside the faith, put there by priests the king maintained. The Roman emperor summoned the councils that defined the doctrine he then obeyed. The Chinese emperor examined and certified every man qualified to say what the canon meant. None of these men was cheating; each was wearing a garment that had been altered to fit, repeatedly, over centuries, by tailors he employed. **That, and not any superiority in the story, is what an old robe is: a thing with room in it, because somebody made room.**

Now run the consequences of having none, and the whole study falls out.

The interpretive position had never been an office, because the fusion of rule and revelation had been achieved in one person over ten years rather than in an institution over four centuries — so there was no chair to sit in, and the attempt to occupy it in person, as *khalīfat Allāh*, read as usurpation to everyone who remembered the person.

There was no credential to buy, because no certifying institution existed yet — so the state bought the corpus instead, and thereby paid for the assembly and distribution of the standard against which its own conduct would be measured.

The seam formed crowded, because it formed while the state was looking elsewhere, and the one moment at which an interpretive position can be captured is the moment it forms.

Formation could not use its strongest lever, because there had not been time for a generation to be raised inside the creed — so the whole weight fell on the costly display of belief, which is the one cue a ruler cannot send, because its content is that he had nothing to gain.

The equality clause could not be glossed away, because it was thirty years old and everybody could read it — so a fiscal system sorted by a criterion anybody might cross had no stable administrative fix, and the fix that saved the revenue worked by confirming the grievance.

And the charge sheet was checkable. God appointed us is unfalsifiable. Did you kill his grandson is not. A young creed gives a ruler an unanswerable claim at the top of his title and a completely auditable record underneath it, and the audit is what accumulated.

Which yields the study's contribution, stated as the proposition a conqueror's position actually poses:

> **A conqueror should prefer an old robe to a good one.** The age of a legitimating doctrine is a variable of the first order and its effects are systematic. An old doctrine has slack, because interpreters have been paid to put slack in it. A new one has none, and it has witnesses. The most dangerous creed a ruler can hold is a young, written, specific one that his own people believe — because it is precisely the belief that makes it load-bearing, and precisely the youth that makes it unforgiving.

What the case confirms, complicates and refutes

Confirms, and unusually cleanly: that structural change is elite. The rising came out of a province where the state's governor had already been driven from his capital by other Arabs, after three years in which the dynasty killed one of its own caliphs, razed the walls of its own province's cities and produced four rulers in a year. It was led by men with commands, on the register, organised for thirty years with money, couriers and cadres, and the peasants who came to its meetings came in some cases for the food. Nothing in this case requires the framework's rule to bend.

Confirms the liberty test at three points on its scale in a single century: a guarantee whose only beneficiaries had disarmed to obtain it, repudiated within days; a settlement whose beneficiaries included a clergy with office and a treasury with a revenue line, which lasted a thousand years; and an exclusion whose injured party had no protector at all, which destroyed the dynasty that made it.

Complicates the surveillance diagnostic, twice: read it *directionally*, because this state watched its own conquest caste and not the conquered; and read its *subject-matter*, because what it tracked was location and not belief. A state that polices minds wants agreement. A state that polices feet has settled for arithmetic.

Complicates the medium-of-payment test, by showing what the disguised labour draft is *for*. It is a laundering operation, and laundering requires an audience. Where none exists the labour is taken openly, which means the absence of the disguise is evidence about the extractor's audience and not about his restraint.

Complicates the metabolic-death test with a specification: the note is called not when an order falls but when the coordination stops, and a change of dynasty inside one civilisation almost never stops it because the successor wants the machine. The Sawād's note came due in 937, not 750, and the diagnostic to run on any case is whether the incoming party wanted the machine.

Refutes nothing outright — but it puts real pressure on the assumption that a conqueror who governs cheaply is thereby a milder one, in two ways. The first-generation mildness in Egypt was a function of the conqueror's illiteracy and expired on the schedule of his learning: the *dīwāns* Arabised from 697, the Christian officials displaced across the eighth century, the new survey from 724, the risings from 725. **Where mildness has an expiry date it was never a policy.** And the same devices that produced the gentleness produced the exclusion, which is a matter for the section that follows.

The strongest case for the defence

Now state the counter-position at full strength and in its own voice, because a study that has spent twelve modules on a dynasty owes the best version of the case against its own reading.

You have written a study of a dynasty and it should have been a study of a religion, and the substitution has made you miss the only thing that matters.

Consider what actually happened in the century you have been auditing. A movement that began in a marginal town in an unregarded peninsula ended it with its language, its calendar, its law and its God installed as the working furniture of everything from the Atlantic to the Indus — and it did this without an inquisition, without forced conversion, without destroying a church, without a single doctrinal war against the conquered, and against the active fiscal preference of the state that carried it. Your own evidence establishes the last point: they legislated to stop people converting and people converted anyway, in numbers that eventually made the exclusion unsustainable. What kind of analysis describes a belief spreading against its own state's interest as a mechanism of elite capture?

Second, measure these men against what they actually replaced rather than against a chamber they never had. They replaced two exhausted empires, one of which had spent two centuries persecuting the majority of its own subjects over a Christological formula, had

installed a patriarch with civil power to enforce it, had driven the head of the Egyptian church into the marshes for thirteen years and drowned his brother in a sack. The Umayyads ended that with a letter. Every Miaphysite, Nestorian, Jew and Zoroastrian in the Near East received an authority above him that did not care what he believed, and kept his church, his court, his clergy and his law — on your own account, for a thousand years. You explain this by counting who would have been hurt by a breach. Very well: notice that on your own explanation this is the most durable guarantee of communal religious autonomy the premodern world produced, and that it was made by these men and not by anybody else.

Third, your accounting is empty and you admit it. No destruction layer. No metabolic collapse. The canals maintained, the flood damage of the previous order repaired, the grain route reopened, the currency reformed, and the great-power wars of four centuries ended. You reach for a sawyer's wages and a school that was never built because the ordinary columns give you nothing — and you should ask, before inventing new columns, why the ordinary ones are empty.

And fourth, the thing your framework cannot see. This order was destroyed by the inclusion its own doctrine demanded. Not by exhaustion, not by decadence, not by a stronger enemy — by having told everyone that the noblest is the most God-fearing, failing to pay out on it, and being prosecuted with its own scripture by men who believed it. An order that dies of its subjects' inclusion is a different moral object from one that dies of their exhaustion, and a method that files both under "the floor cracked" has lost the distinction that matters.

The answer

Take the four in order, conceding what must be conceded and refusing what must be refused.

On the belief's spread, concede everything and notice what has been conceded. This study has held throughout that the framework has no view on whether the revelation was true and that a built thing which became real is more durable and more genuine than a lie could ever be. The belief spread because people believed it. The men who died at Karbalāʾ were not performing, the four thousand who marched to ʿAyn al-

Warda were not performing, and the scholars who refused the salary were not performing.

But look at what the counter-position has just said. It says the doctrine spread *against the state's interest*, and that is not a defence of the state — it is the sharpest available statement of the distance between the movement and the dynasty. The Umayyads did not carry that belief. They were carried by it, taxed against it, and convicted out of it. Crediting them with its spread is crediting a river for the bridge.

And chronologically the credit is misplaced in any case. Conversion in this period was gradual and limited; on the best quantitative reconstruction the mass conversions came *after* 750. The achievement being claimed for the Umayyads largely happened under the dynasty that destroyed them.

On the comparison with what was replaced — refuse it by name. Setting one conquest's outcome against the previous conquest's outcome is not a comparison of conquest with self-rule, and the foreclosed local alternative is in the record and should be said out loud. The Miaphysite communities of Egypt and Syria had their own hierarchies, their own languages, their own law and considerable capacity to govern themselves, and had been demanding precisely that from Constantinople for two centuries. A Coptic Egypt administering itself was not a fantasy. It was the thing the Copts had been asking for.

What they got instead was a different foreign authority which happened to be indifferent to their theology. **And hold the other half without flinching, because it is equally true**: indifference is worth an enormous amount, it was delivered immediately and at no cost to them, and this study has said so and does not withdraw it. The correct statement is the whole one. They received a real and very large benefit, which was not the benefit they had asked for, from people who had not asked them, and they paid for it in a levy that marked them as subjects for the next twelve hundred years.

On the empty accounting — refuse the credit for parsimony, and refuse it precisely. The columns are thin and this study has said so at length and will not pretend otherwise. But the inference does not follow, because **the same devices produced the gentleness and the exclusion.** They did not preach to the Copt because they did not want him. They did not school him because schooling him would have meant seating him and seating him meant paying him. They left his church alone

because his church collected the tax and his bishop kept him quiet. The mildness and the exclusion are one policy read from two sides, and a reckoning that credits the first without entering the second has read one side of a page. Where the same instrument produced both, the mildness is a fact about the endowment and not about the conqueror's character.

And on death by inclusion — concede the distinction, refuse the credit.

The distinction is real and this study should record it. Most orders in this collection died of exhaustion, of conquest, or of a fracture over rates and land, and their subjects' grievances were about how much was being taken. This one died of a promise it had made in writing and could not keep, prosecuted in its own vocabulary, out of a corpus its own caliph had commissioned. That is a different kind of ending and the corpus should carry it as one.

But three things refuse the moral inference.

The men who ended it were not the excluded. They were disappointed insiders — settled Khurasani Arabs on the register, commanded by men with commands, organised for thirty years. The excluded supplied a grievance, a vocabulary and some of the numbers. They did not supply the officers, the money or the outcome, and they got nothing at the settlement: the clientage requirement lapsed under the Abbasids because the new coalition's composition made it obsolete, not because anyone conceded anything to anybody.

An order that promises inclusion and withholds it is not thereby better than one that promises nothing. It is differently placed. The Umayyads' difficulty was never that they were less just than a Roman prefect; it is that they had signed something, and that the signature was the instrument they ruled by. That is the whole of what this collection means by saying a robe is also a leash, and it is a statement about mechanism, not about virtue.

And the seductive move must be named. The counter-position is asking that the order be credited for the standard it failed to meet. That is the most attractive defence available to any regime with a good creed and a poor record, and it should be refused in a sentence: **a promise unkept is a fact about the promise, not a credit to the promiser.**

What is left when both are granted

And then the honest ending, which is neither a verdict nor a vindication.

The filter has no foresight and no preference. It selected against this arrangement because the arrangement could not bear the pressure it met with the materials its founders happened to have — a doctrine too young to be tailored, an army registered by tribe, a co-opted class paid in entitlements, and an outlet that shut in 740. Eighty-nine years is a short record, and a short record is not a verdict against the men who ran the order any more than a thousand years would have been a medal. It makes this a **control case**: the identical engine caught before formation had the generations to compound it and obscure it, which is exactly what makes it the sharper test of the method. Very little in this study had to be dug out from under four centuries of accreted piety, because there had not been four centuries.

What the Umayyads actually did, on the evidence and stated without flattery or demonisation, is hold the apparatus of a movement for ninety years during precisely the decades in which its belief was hardening from a claim into a world. They held it competently as administrators and badly by the standard the movement itself supplied. They were destroyed by men quoting that standard back at them, out of a collection of it their own caliph had paid to have written down and distributed.

And the belief was not harmed in the slightest. **They lost and it won** — completely, and it is still winning, and a fifth of the species now inhabits as the plain shape of the world a thing that in 690 was too new to have been installed in a single child.

That is the strangest fact in the case and it is the one the framework can state and cannot evaluate. A dynasty failed the filter absolutely. The thing it was carrying passed it more completely than almost anything in the record. Nothing in this method entitles anyone to read the second as a judgement on the first, or the first as a judgement on the second — and the whole discipline of this collection consists in refusing to.

A note on sources.

This module argues from the twelve that precede it and introduces no new evidence; every fact used here is sourced in the module where it was established, and the notes

there carry the qualifications. The comparisons to other cases in the collection — the Qing conquest and its examination system, the Ottoman fratricide law and the *devshirme*, the Mughal *mansabdari*, the Ptolemaic capture of the Egyptian grain administration, the medieval European tenurial grant and its military consideration, and the colonial studies whose shape is tested and largely refuted here — rest on the companion studies and on the Field Manual's own worked examples, and are stated at the level of generality those support.

Two cautions are worth repeating at the close because they govern the whole study and not merely its parts. **The narrative spine of this case is hostile testimony**: al-Ṭabarī, al-Balādhurī, al-Yaʿqūbī and the rest were compiled a century and more after the events, under the dynasty that hunted the Umayyad family across three continents, by men with a professional stake in how that family looked, and in the case of the revolution itself they were writing the founding narrative of the regime they served. Where this study could reach documentary evidence instead — the coins, the inscriptions, the papyri of Aphroditō and Nessana, the standing buildings, the Coptic and Syriac chronicles — it has done so and has said which kind of evidence carries each claim. **And the Abbasid editing is not a hypothesis.** It is visible in gold in Jerusalem, where a caliph's name was cut out of a mosaic and another set in its place, and the date of seventy-two was left standing.

Finally, the discipline this collection holds and this study has tried to keep: the framework has no view on whether the revelation was true, and neither does this account. Naming a constructed origin is not a debunking; a thing that was built and then became real is a different and more durable object than a lie; and the people formed by it are not dupes. Legibility is not pardon, and it was never meant to be a conviction either.